Christmas

BING

Edited by REG BRISTO

No 70

1983

A HAPPY, PEACEFUL,
AND BLESSED
CHRISTMAS

BING'S INVARIABLE CHRISTMAS GREETING

"may your days be merry and bright"

Christmas Greetings and Every Good Wish

for a Happy New Year

If you were to stop Mr. Average Man on any street in any city in the world and say, "Name the greatest all-time singer of popular songs..." the reply would inevitably be a short and simple monosyllable: 'BING'!"

...Seasons come and seasons go, but Crosby goes on for ever, as perennial as Spring and as popular as popcorn. Time (as Shakespeare said in another connection) cannot wither nor custom stale his infinite variety. His voice has been heard more often by more people than that of any human being who has ever lived.....

In spite of all the awards, encomia, and national honours, Bing never learned to act like a Very Important Person. He remained a simple individual, a straightforward fellow from the Far West.....

Bing belongs to the world. He was, and is, internationally beloved. An ambassador without portfolio, he has proved to be one of America's best emissaries of goodwill....."

Words culled from the writings to accompany a records-issue; as true today as they were when penned 30 years ago. Indeed, as true as they were, unwritten albeit, 30 years before. And thus they will always be true....

So much for the mean, mixed, minds that have sought to - in puerile fashion - besmirch and denigrate Bing Crosby, artist and gentleman beyond compare.

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BING

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Here it is again - already! Christmas....hardly seems possible - we've only got to say how young the policemen look these days and our grizzled state will be fully revealed. On the other hand, we've heard much younger people remark on how quickly Yuletide seems to come round. Perhaps the shops, with their whirring tills, produce this effect by starting the Christmas 'rush' that much earlier - it seems - year by year. Anyway, we heard Bing singing WHITE CHRISTMAS in the town centre before November was out - and he just provided the backing for a programme on ersatz Christmas trees on our telly. Background music, forsooth! Ruddy cheek...

We have to confess we've underestimated the appeal of the GHC radio programmes. This is a PLEDGE, not just a promise, THEY WILL BE RESUMED NEXT ISSUE.

We've just heard, as we were winding-up this Christmas issue, that a certain lady is off to Yugo-Slavia for 14 days....the significance of this will be appreciated when you have read the story which starts on page 23. It leaves us utterly exhausted. Now, all we can do is pray the Post Office does its stuff and gets this issue to everyone.

Original Material (c) BING, 1983

Christmas

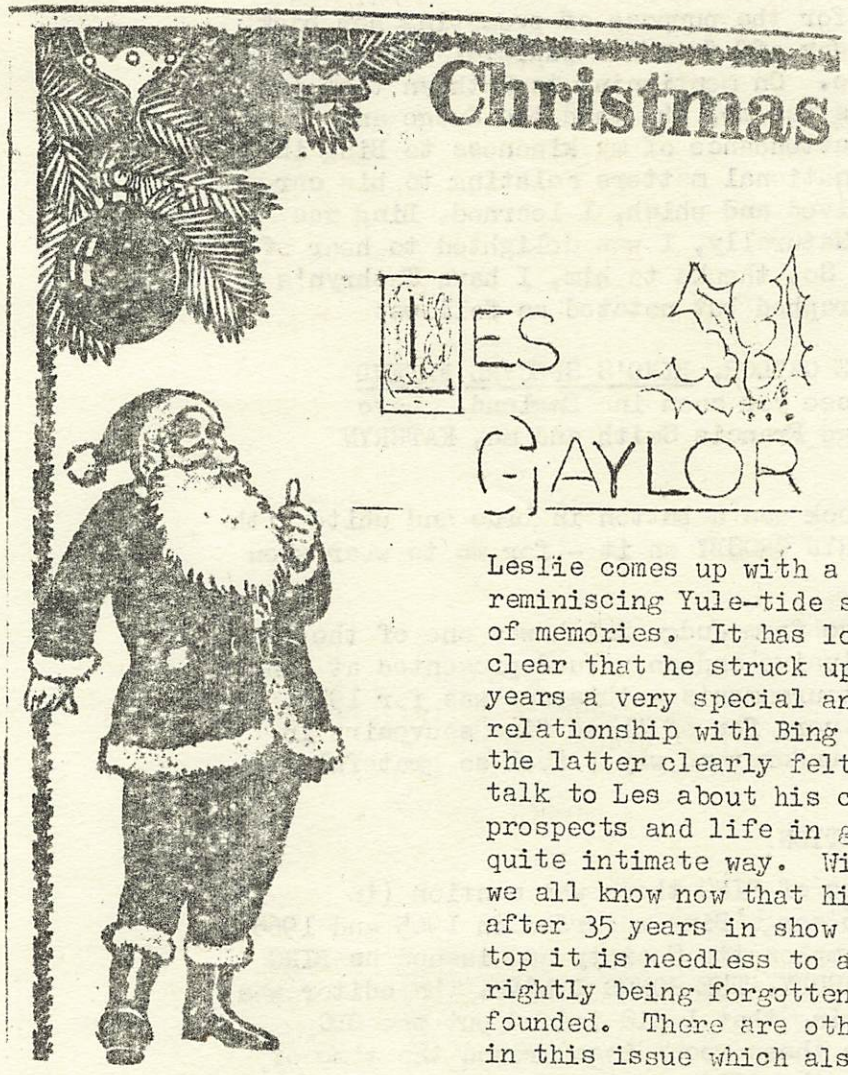
"And in despair I bowed my head,
There is no peace on earth, I said,
..for hate is strong and mocks the
song of peace on earth, goodwill to
men..."

Thus Bing beautifully interpreted the words of the celebrated poet, a brief but telling recording. Every time we hear it we have the feeling that it would be so much better, more helpful, if I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY had sold the astronomical figures that - and perhaps instead of - WHITE CHRISTMAS has attained.

Mercifully, we don't have to comment on the turbulent state of the world whereby we seem to be like the Gadarene swine, or the leemings, consumed with the maniacal theme of self-destruction as the world's leaders play a forbidding game of poker, it seems, with the whole of civilisation. A situstion be it noted that now transcends political views; the brave few who recognise the dire situation we now face are ridiculed.

No, all we have to do is reinforce our very good wishes to all our members. To our friends in Crosbyana everywhere, America where the memory of Bing is showing splendid sigas of continually expanding interest; Canada, most certainly in Australia which must have some of the greatest and most knowledgeable of all; our many European friends..... friends in Crosbyana everywhererе. As 1983 winds down to its final days and Orwell's 1984 is upon us we can only hope and pray that the song mentioned above finally triumphs with faith that is strong, as the poet maintained. And while, sadly, we are beginning to sound like the parish magazine we would especially like to wish well all those we know who, in 1983, have suffered bereavements, illness, loneliness, financial setbacks consequent upon loss of work....setbacks of every description. May 1984 show us a better face. Our heartfelt greetings and best wishes.

The enclosed BING calendar is a presentation by our esteemed benefactor in Gateshead, JOHN JOYCE.
JEAN BIGNELL, 21 St. Andrews Avenue, Wembley, Midd'x, HAO 2QB gloomily reports only one new contributor to the BUY BING'S HOME FUND, - MR. HARRY C. ROSS, in the past quarter. Total is now £71.50 Hardly sufficient to lift up our hearts - surely we can START THE NEW YEAR RIGHT ?



LES GAYLOR

Leslie comes up with a warm, reminiscing Yule-tide series of memories. It has long been clear that he struck up over the years a very special and unique relationship with Bing in which the latter clearly felt he could talk to Les about his career, his prospects and life in general in a quite intimate way. With hindsight, we all know now that his feelings that, after 35 years in show business (at the top it is needless to add) he was rightly being forgotten were ill-founded. There are other reproductions in this issue which also show that Bing appeared quite willing to bow out..... Little did he know.

****

Firstly, I would like, as is right and traditional, to offer my thanks to all those I have had the pleasure of meeting during the past year. The continuing enthusiasm of fellow Crosby enthusiasts is always most gratifying, and particularly so when meeting such people for the first time. One is continually surprised and delighted on meeting such people that so many new and personal stories of Bing are heard for the first time, all adding to the wide spectrum of Crosbyana and making it thus so much more interesting.

To start naming such people would invite possible disaster on my part, but exceptions might justifiably be made. For example, I was extremely thrilled when the summer months were ending that two packages arrived from my very good friend Justice Francis Smith of the Supreme Court of New York. The first contained a copy of Kathryn's book, MY LIFE WITH BING, duly autographed by the good lady.

Kathryn was a Bloomingdale's Store on Long Island, New York, in June last for the purpose of promoting her book. Judge Smith took a day off from his judicial duties and headed for the store. On mentioning to Kathryn that one of the two books was for me, she told the Judge and other representatives in attendance of my kindness to Bing in the way of many promotional matters relating to his career in which I was involved and which, I learned, Bing was most happy about. Naturally, I was delighted to hear of this from Francis. So, thanks to him, I have Kathryn's book not only autographed but notated as follows:

> "TO LESLIE GAYLOR, BING'S SPECIAL FRIEND
> Hope to see you soon in England. Love from Judge Francis Smith and me, KATHRYN CROSBY."

Enclosed with the book was a button in blue and white with the words MEET KATHRYN CROSBY on it - for me to wear when I meet her again!

In the second package from Judge Smith was one of the beam whisky bottles so elusive and so valued presented at Bing's famous Pro-Am Golf tournaments - this one was for 1976. There must be very, very few of these fine souvenirs in Britain so you will understand why I feel so grateful to Judge Smith.

THAT LONGINES COLLECTION:

In the previous issue of BING there was mention (in DISCROSBY) of the 36 songs Bing recorded in 1965 and 1968 for the Longines Symphonette Society and issued as BING CROSBY'S GOLDEN TREASURY: THE SONGS I LOVE. The editor was quite correct in saying that I did indeed put the BBC Record Library on to these recordings around the time of their issue and that they did acquire them at my suggestion. I've heard from a number of members that they've heard them played on the BBC's Radio 2 network in recent times. At my suggestion they have been played on Alan Dell's popular SOUNDS EASY programme as well as on David Jacons's programme on Saturday mornings. As both these broadcasts are not 'Request' programmes but are compiled at the discretion of the presenters and their producers I think it can be seen what can be done with a tactful approach!

I had some fine correspondence with Ken Evans, producer of the David Jacobs programme and that is why the Longines tracks have been featured on this programme and will, no doubt, continue to be so featured.

At the time of the release of this set I was in touch with another BBC record presenter, namely David Gell, who played several of them in an album review programme, but for so many years these unique recordings have lain idle in the BBC Record Library. So I decided to do something about it.

Bing often remarked to me and, indeed, in public, that he had always been grateful to the BBC for the way in which it had always aired his recordings. There was, of course, a time when Crosby records were the mainstay of most request programmes! But the passage of time has inevitably produced a changed situation whereby the producers at the BBC who virtually grew up with Bing, as did so many of us, have retired leaving what might be called "a new generation" !

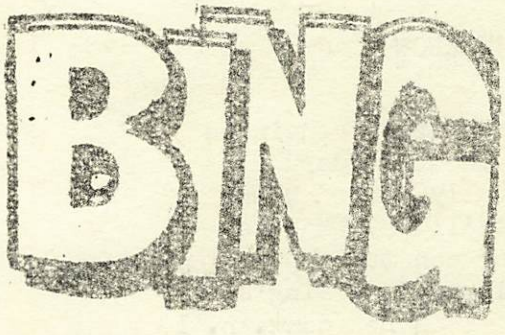
In fact, it might be said there have been several generations of record presenters since Bing's hey-days of the 30's and 40's! And no one needs telling how the radio scene has changed. There are producers, however, who do present Crosby recordings but in the main their choice appears to be limited to the same couple of dozen recordings and these are played over and over again. So, all members (those at home in the UK I mean of course) will agree how nice it is to have some of the lesser-known tracks played from time to time, to get away ffom the well-worn records such as NOW YOU HAS JAZZ, McNAMARA'S BAND, WELL DID YOU EVAH?, BUSY DOIN' NOTHING, WHITE CHRISTMAS and so on, nice as they are. And here I'd like to give member Trevor Wagstaffe a pat on the back for services rendered on radio in the Bing cause. There are others and I hope they will forgive me not mentioning everyone.

Before leaving the subject of the Longines recordings I might mention the special tie-up I managed to make with the Society's representatives based in Hove, Sussex. The sets cost £10 but my suggestion that I have two sets for that figure was readily accepted when I explained my use of them, for I sent a set to BBC's Radio Solent, a local station based in Southampt9n. So on this station at least the records have been freely used. The other set I presented to the hospitals' Isle of Wight Broadcasting Station so that over the many years patients in hospital in the area have also heard them, so the programme-controller tells me.

VARYING VERSIONS:

Over the past year I've had many enquiries relating to the album Bing made with a childrens' camp chorus. This is called SINGALONG WITH BING (long before Max Bygraves thought of it!) and is made up of certain songs taken from their original release on 101 GANG SONGS featuring Bing with accompaniment by the Jack Halloran orchestra and chorus, but SINGALONG WITH BING has the maestro singing with the children.

Some years ago the Crosby office told me about this album, saying it was available at childrens'camps in America but that they would get me a couple of copies so that I wouldn't miss out. They also gave me the address of CAMP SINGALONG INC., 200 West 57th St. New York. It worked hout, however, that the Crosby office managed to get me just one copy; it has a deep red album sleeve with CAMP STRAKE in black letters on a white background at the top. The actual label has a lovely blue colour with silver lettering proclaiming it to be be a PROJECT RECORDS RELEASE, NUMBER CS1003, tho' oddly enough the sleeve bears the number CS100.



I did write to Camp Singalong, too and they proved most co-operative, saying that although the record was specially made for their childrens' camps membership they felt they just had to let me have a copy. When it arrived the sleeve was entirely different! This one was blue and white with a drawing of Bing and the children camp singers!

Which illustrates the varied ways in which project records can be issued, I think, and the difficulties thereby created for those who want to collect ALL issues!

"THEY DON'T WANT MY RECORDS..."

I am frequently reminded of the time when Bing and I were having an interesting conversation in his dressing-room on the ROAD TO HONG KONG set at Shepperton Film Studios in 1961. As Bing records of newer material were pretty lean at the time I asked him that if I could get some British record company interested in recording him would he come to London, if only to make one LP?

> Turning to me Bing said: "Its like this, Leslie, they don't want my records these days. I've had a long, long, career recording and I'm grateful for all the good things that have happened to me. All I'm going to do now is record a few songs from any films I'm associated with - and that's about it."

This came as a shock but, of course, it had to be remembered that popular 'music' was undergoing what can only be described as a traumatic revolution. Elvis Presley, skiffle groups, and other astonishing forms of 'pop' were in the process of building the record industry into a mammoth one - much bigger than it had ever been before. Quality? That didn't seem to matter.

Bing went on to say, in a reflective mood, that he had to think of the musical arrangements that would have to be made for any new recordings. Then there was the hiring of the musicians and the studios, engineers and so on. Add to that the manufacture, distribution, and projecting of the records it would total quite a sum - just for his records to lie on the shelves of dealers. In short, a futile operation. Bing added that he had no wish to waste his own OR OTHER PEOPLE'S MONEY on such an exercise! It was all rather chastening.

Then I brought up the CBS radio recordings he had made with Buddy Cole and could he 'lend a hand' to try and get some of them issued commercially? "Well," said Bing, "these recordings are not proper production jobs and basically, they ~~they~~ were made for brief radio tranmissions only. In any case, we don't totally own them, or have full control over them. Again, it would involve a lot of money - probably wasted. THERE AREN'T ENOUGH FELLAS LIKE YOU AROUND LESLIE to make it worthwhile."

I then remarked to Bing that whatever they were made for, they sounded great, don't you think so Bing?

> TO WHICH BING CALMLY REPLIED: "I DON'T KNOW LESLIE - I'VE NEVER HEARD 'EM."

There was no doubt that at that time Bing was firmly convinced that as style were changing so devastatingly in the record business his "hey-day" was over, and I was really amazed when he suddenly said: "A time will come when they'll say Who was Bing Crosby?" Perhaps our inventive Editor can turn up something from the archives to illustrate this mood of Bing's? (Happy to oblige Leslie - see opposite - Ed) Les cont. p. 13

John London

I AM AMAZED TO HEAR BING CROSBY TELL ME: 'Teenagers don't know who I am'

NINE grandchildren and two more on the way . . . **Bing Crosby** admitted to them a little wearily and a little wistfully when he arrived in London yesterday. He is accepting his role as one of the Grand Old Men of show business with sad fortitude.

"My mother who is 91 has 21 great grandchildren," he said with a rueful shake of his head. "I'm 56 now and I've been in show business for 35 years . . . I have no plans for retiring. I'm getting a little difficult to cast these days, but I would like to make one serious dramatic picture.

"Today's teenagers don't know who I am," he continued the sad story. "I was very surprised at the interest shown in my arrival here."

Then, with devastating modesty, he added: "It's flattering to know I'm still remembered."

But interest there was: The band at Claridge's where he is staying played his signature tune, "When the Blue of the Night," and reporters and photographers clattered down the steps of his hotel after him. There was a great cluster of people and some tried to leap into his taxi with him.

Horrified

This dramatic reception contrasted oddly with the non-recognition he met within his own embassy.

"I just just dropped in on **Jock Whitney** (John Hay Whitney), "who's an old friend," he said, "and no one knew who I was—except Jock, of course." He spent the rest of the afternoon showing his wife **Kathy Grant** the sights of London, and being measured up for a few new suits and a new dinner jacket. "My tailor was horrified by the suit I'm wearing. It's Hollywood-made and he didn't approve of the turn-back cuffs."

The Crosbys are in London until tomorrow when they go to Rome for the Olympic Games, and they will also have an audience with the **Pope.**

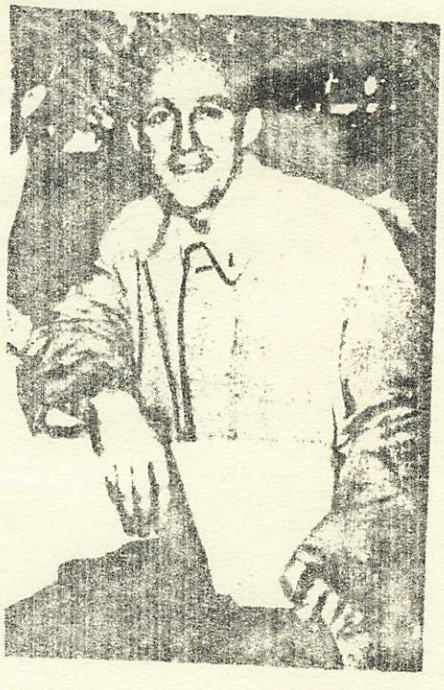
I asked Mr. Crosby about his plans for the future. "Well, I'm making 'The Road to Hong Kong' next year, probably shooting over here," he said. "We hope to get **Brigitte Bardot** or **Gina Lollobrigida** to lead with us, but they're both very difficult girls to get hold of."

Olympic golf?

One plan he will have to change is the TV series he was going to do in Ireland, for it coincides with a big match for the Pittsburg Pirates, a baseball team he is interested in. "They'd just about kill me if I wasn't there to see the game," he said.

Mrs. Crosby has no stage plans for the moment: her husband explained that she has plenty to do looking after the family, and she finishes her training as a State registered nurse this autumn.

And no conversation with Mr. Crosby would be complete without some reference to golf. "I wish it was one of the events at the Olympic Games—I'd be sure to win it."



Song Hits from their new Paramount Picture

"HOLIDAY INN"

Lyrics and Music by Irving Berlin

FEATURING

BING CROSBY • FRED ASTAIRE

Bob Crosby and His Orchestra
John Scott Trotter and His Orchestra
The Music Maids and Hal
Ken Darby Singers
Vocals with Orchestra

DECCA ALBUM No. A-306
COMPLETE ON SIX TEN-INCH RECORDS

CONTENTS:

18424 HAPPY HOLIDAY
BING CROSBY with The Music Maids and Hal and John Scott Trotter and His Orchestra
BE CAREFUL IT'S MY HEART
BING CROSBY with John Scott Trotter And His Orchestra

18425 ABRAHAM
BING CROSBY with Ken Darby Singers and John Scott Trotter and His Orchestra
EASTER PARADE
BING CROSBY with John Scott Trotter And His Orchestra

18426 I'VE GOT PLENTY TO BE THANKFUL FOR
BING CROSBY with Bob Crosby and His Orchestra
SONG OF FREEDOM
BING CROSBY with Ken Darby Singers and John Scott Trotter and His Orchestra

18427 I'LL CAPTURE YOUR HEART
BING CROSBY and FRED ASTAIRE Assisted by Margaret Lenhart with Bob Crosby and His Orchestra
Tap Dancing by Fred Astaire
LAZY BING CROSBY with Bob Crosby and His Orchestra

18428 YOU'RE EASY TO DANCE WITH
I CAN'T TELL A LIE
FRED ASTAIRE with Bob Crosby and His Orchestra

Copyright, 1942, Decca Records, Inc.

Much later on in our chat I mentioned his 1933 recording of STAY ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE STREET. Immediately Bing turned and asked: "Do you know who wrote the arrangement for that recording?" On my replying I had no idea, Bing said: "Glenn Miller".

That Bing should recall this after so many years was in direct contrast, not only to his Buddy Cole recordings but to what his studio dresser had told me - that Bing was 'very forgetful' and always seemed to have a lotof thoughts at the back of his mind.

And I must admit, too, that I frequently got the impression that Bing was deeply in thought and had, literally, to drag his mind back to the present moment.

Despite what Bing had said he did make a great Christmas record in October 1962, I WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS, for Warner Bros. and released by them. I wrote to this company to thank them for issuing a new Crosby recording, and was most delighted when a reply came back from no less than the President of Warner Bros saying they felt it was a fine album and that they would certainly issue more if Mr. Crosby would agree to make them! And my mind went back to that day a year earlier in Shepperton when the Old Master's mind seemed quite definitely made up.

WHAT WAS GOING ON ?

It was in 1962 also that my long-time correspondent, Basil Grillo of the Crosby office agreed to help me and have a word with Bing on the subject of new records. Perhaps I would submit some album ideas?

I paid a lot of attention to the matter and came up with what I thought were half-a-dozen good album concepts. Basil studied them and also thought they were acceptable to the extent that he said he would be putting my ideas around in "areas where they can best be considered and we can only hope some interest is shown".

At a later date he wrote again to say that not a single company to whom he had put the ideas of mine showed any interest in making new Crosby albums ! This was quite shattering and appeared to confirm Bing's own judgement.

> One of the ideas I had put forward to Bing and Basil Grillo, you may like to know, was entitled SONGS OF THE SEASONS! using three songs from each of the four seasons of the year - and that was as far back as 1962!

If we move on now to 1975 it was then that Ken Barnes, Pete Moore and Martin Davis of United Artists (and indeed myself) got involved in bringing Bing to London to make some recordings. It was conveyed quite firmly to Ken Barnes by those underwriting the project financially that they wanted "new style" and "more modern" kind of Crosby recordings. "We don't want any old-fashioned type of Crosby records," they declared, "the record market has changed."

In short, they weren't parting with a sizeable sum of money to acquire Bing/Buddy

Cole CBS recordings and issue them in what they considered "old-fashioned" recordings for the interests of a few hundred Crosby record collectors. So, even the great Bing was well aware that things were a'changing.

Luckily, and happily, in the last years of his life he came to realise there were many great and helpful admirers around - a large number indeed in Britain - who remained well and truly interested in him and his talents. A good start had certainly been made when fate stepped in.

Finally in this piece I would like to thank all those who have all,in their various ways, given me great pleasure with their Crosby efforts over the past year. Those who have presented social events, record and tape items, and in other ways kept the Crosby scene as fascinating as ever. And this, of course, applies to those at home and my very good friends in the States. And remembering all those members who write to me saying thr 3 months between BING's cannot go quickly enough, my thanks to Editor Reg !

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS.

Editor: Our thanks to Leslie for his never-failing interest; his good wishes will be appreciated by all, and warmly reciprocated.

Leslie's chats with Bing in the 50's and 60's are revealing; but, much can be added - his 20-year contract with Decca had ended (tho' it will be remembered that Decca declared "our studios are always open to Mr. Crosby"); his horizons were broadening. In fact, Leslie's columns might easily be read in conjunction with SPOKANE TO GROUSE MOORS! But the plain truth is that while his classic material was continually being reissued (BING'S HOLLYWOOD for instance, 1963) there was a whole string of 'new material' albums in the 60's and 70's, e.g. HOLIDAY IN EUROPE, ON THE HAPPY SIDE, RETURN TO PARADISE, GREAT COUNTRY HITS, TRAVELLIN' TWO-BEAT, FANCY MEETING YOU HERE, THE LONGINES, THOROUGHLY MODERN BING, A TIME TO BE JOLLY, BING 'N BASIE in addition to the film-associated material Bing mentioned to Les - HONG KONG, SEVEN HOODS, HIGH SOCIETY. I rather fancy what Bing meant was that the time had come when his records were no longer AUTOMATIC best-sellers! And, he had lost Jack Kapp, his recording guiding genius.

SHELDON O'CONNEL, 12464 Breault, Pierrefonds, QUE. Canada,H8Z 1B4 writes: I recently saw a statuette of Bing, believed made in England. It is about 4 inches in height of light gold coloured metal and stands on a white plastic base lettered BING CROSBY. the arms are outstretched like a standing Jolson! Prepared to pay good price for such an item - if other similar available, please communicate too.

Editor: Sheldon is closely associated with the forthcoming new book on Bing - whether as author or part-author we do not as yet know. Be that as it may, any members in a position to help him should communicate directly with Sheldon - and we know despite his offer he will not be held to ransom! Remember to use the post-code - or Zip-code as its known in Canada. Omission really does delay mail.

BING

UNKEMPT CROSBY and GLAMOUR-LESS GRACE

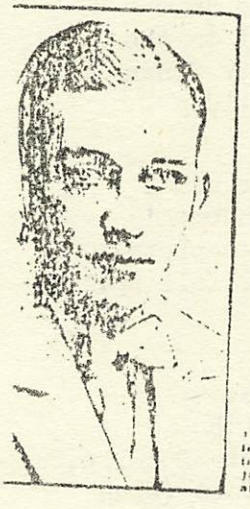
Bewildered, unshaven Bing leaves his voice at home and puts himself over as a real actor . . . he even out-acts Grace Kelly.

Alas for inspired plans...we had planned to use in this space a photo of Bing resplendent in top hat, white tie, and tails, complete with white silk scarf, a picture of true sartorial elegance to counter the admittedly contrived unkempt appearance of Bing on the left. True, this was for the film THE COUNTRY GIRL but nevertheless Bing did come in for a good deal of ribbing over his 'casual' dress - some of it due, it is said, to his colour-blindness! But, the black and white contrast was too great and the picture just wouldn't reproduce! Perhaps HIGH SOCIETY was, appropriately, Bing's most elegant film role as regards dress.

****

Below is surely one of the very first bill-posters proclaiming an appearance by Mr. C. - with Al Rinker, and therefore of great historical interest. This must have beve been 1927 when, having signed up with Paul Whiteman and before actually joining this famous orchestra they made a visit home and took the opportunity to do a few "jobs" locally to bring in some shekels. No doubt those who saw this show spoke for years afterwards of

Seeing Bing before he was famous.....



SPECIAL ADDED ATTRACTION

BING

Crosby

AND

AL.

Rinker

IN THEIR OWN ORIGINAL NOVELTY

Crosby & Rinker are Spokane boys who in the last year have made a big success in the field of entertainment and have just signed contracts with Paul Whiteman and his band.

"LET'S ALL GO NOW"

Thanksgiving Day Morning Matinee for Children
Admission 10c

SUNNY LEEDS

FOR

18th CONSECUTIVE EVENT

Roundhay Park once more presented its benign autumnal aspects in bright sunshine for our added pleasure in making our way to the elegant Mansion House Hotel for the 18th annual dinner there on Sunday Oct. 2nd last. This was especially fortunate because that Sunday was sandwiched between two very gloomy days indeed.

> Yes, the 18th consecutive annual event, illustrating what a tradition Michael Crampton has built up from comparatively humble beginnings in the City of Leeds. And in his customary welcoming remarks he showed justifiable pride, and indeed, looked forward with confidence to the 20th, the 30th - even the 50th such event! No doubt he had his young son Iain in mind to carry on the good work!

Conspicuously, however, it has to be said that the number of members attending was markedly lower this year with around 45 present. In many cases 'regulars' were absent for very cogent reasons; even so, the number was undeniably down on the 80, 100, even 120 a few years back. One wag suggested some members had innocently ordered a substantial round of drinks at the Waldorf in May and were still in intensive care between bouts of pleading on bended knee to their bank managers for mercy!

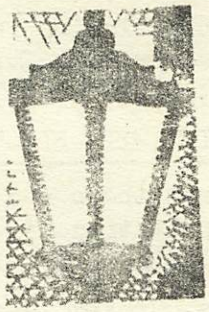
But levity aside, general economic conditions are obviously making themselves felt in a most unpleasant way. The weekend in Leeds, involving for so many travelling expenses and an overnight stay, plus the actual cost of the event (kept to the bare price of the meal) can admittedly add up to a hefty financial outlay - and coming, as it does, as the summer holiday season is ending, doesn't help.

The meal itself this year merits a little more than our usual passing mention if only for the fact that solid 'trenchermen' (and women!) finally rose from it confessing they were replete. Less positive consumers were more succinct: They were full up. So here is the full card:

(1) Mansion Pate & French Toast.
(2) French Onion Soup with Sippitts.
(3) Fresh Halibut Steak Meuniere with Parsley Butter Petit Pois, Tomato Duxelle, Duchesse Potatoes, or new potatoes (when available).
(4) Baked Alaska
(5) Whole Wensleydale & Stilton Cheese with biscuits.
(6) Coffee with Cream & Wafer Mints.

For those, like your reporter, who shied away from the Halibut,

a highly acceptable roast-beef alternative was provided for the main course. Very few indeed took advantage of the alternative and I must confess that the appearance of the halibut steak was so delectable I almost wished I could eat fish! Thus, six courses, readily served and piping hot where required. The Mansion does enjoy a reputation for its cuisine but even so it seemed to excell itself this year,



However, we've jumped ahead; after Michael's opening remarks, yours truly followed as is customary. It was surely significant, I said, that Bing alas had now been deceased for 6 years yet 1983 was now seeing the second of the year's big social events, recalling the Waldorf function last May around Bing's birth-date. And this did not take into account other highly successful meetings which had been held in the North-east and various other places, all of which surely indicates no waning of interest, leave alone lack of interest in Mr. Crosby's tremendous career. The year had produced only one new record issue but there had been what might be termed a spate of books - some of which we could have done without! Michael was not being unduly optimistic in thinking about big things for 1985 (the 20th Leeds meeting) for the number of young people in the Circle was very encouraging. Our membership remained as high as it had ever been and constant enquiries were received - so many people hadn't known of us!

Thereafter the evening followed the usual free-and-easy format which has proved so acceptable - quizzes which revealed the astonishing knowledge of our members, with highly acceptable prizes. Tapes carefully compiled to regale members with the more rare and elusive tracks of Bing were played whenever suitable, and certainly throughout the meal.

> The Mack Sennett 'shorts' proved as popular as ever, providing as they do Bing in great voice in fine songs, a laugh or two and a story no one need bother about! And they <u>are</u> short. Sitting down to a full-length film means that around 2 hours are immediately expended in sitting in silence and darkness, an important point on such social occasions. JOHN JOYCE provided and operated the films.

There was an absorbing innovation when GEORGE HARWOOD presented the film he made during his trip to America earlier in the year. George had well-covered all the important Crosby places of interest and as he hadn't yet recorded his commentary, provided us with an impromptu one off-the-cuff. A good effort.

The practice of members bringing spare records, books, and other Crosbyana was well maintained and many satisfactory bargains were struck.

There were those who felt that the smaller number attending had the effect of making the whole thing much friendlier. Perhaps so, but it would be quite bizarre to even faintly suggest we limit the number. Always it must be "the more the merrier". But, it was a very enjoyable get-together for Crosbyites, thanks again to Michael Crampton.

REPORTS FROM AMERICA

The following is reprinted exactly as reported in the San Franciso press. Even if it wasn't Christmas we would make no comment, but leave it to members to think about:

"LIFE WITH BING" AND THE CROSBY DRAPES

First there was the Crosby Clambake. Now there's a new Crosby 'invitational', a chance to tour Bing and Kathryn's house in Hillsborough - free - with an order for a drapery cleaning.

Mrs. Crosby, described in a promotional release as 'a famous actress and author in her own right', has been a spokeswoman for Coit Drapery Cleaners of Burlingame for the past month. In addition to greeting her 'guests' during the tour that will start Nov. 18, Mrs. Crosby will autograph copies of her book, MY LIFE WITH BING, copies of which are also free with the drapery deal.

The tour is only open to customers who place orders between Nov. 7 and 11 and, yes, the Crosby drapes and rugs were cleaned by Coit. People do strange things for money, there's no denying that. There are people who have seen Kathryn Crosby opening and closing the draperies in TV commercials for Coit Drapery Cleaners Inc., and assumed that she must have been a little short of funds. But then, they said the same thing when Crosby auctioned off a portion of her late husband Bing's memorabilia last year.

Both times she's denied this was true. 'No, I don't need any money, dear,' she said yesterday, her smiles and gracious-lady manners momentarily frosted over. 'I did it because it gives me great delight'. (San Francisco Chronicle, 29 Oct. 1983)

(Editor's note: Drapes are CURTAINS here.)

BING'S FRIENDS & COLLECTORS SOCIETY in the States carried the following in its Newsletter:

The Bing Crosby National Pro-Am had some spectacular golf but unfortunately little mention was made of the man for whom the tournament is named. If one is interested in golf the TV coverage might have been satisfactory. For those who watch the Crosby to be entertained, however, the programs were boring. Phil Harris wasn't given an ppportunity to put some life into the proceedings. The spirit this year seemed less of people getting together to enjoy themselves on the course, win or lose, as Bing envisioned, but instead emphasised the big money involved. Sad to see such a once exciting event turn out to be merely ordinary.....

LATER REPORTS IN THE SAME PAPERS: CROSBY MANSION TOURS HIT SNAG.

Kathryn Crosby's plans to promote a carpet cleaning company with tours of her Hillsborough mansion have run afoul of a city ordinance against conducting retail business in the exclusive Peninsula town. Crosby and officials of Coit Drapery and Carpet Cleaners have been asked by town officials to explain in writing why Crosby's widely publicised tours, set to begin Nov. 18, should not be blocked, Town Manager Robert Davidson said yesterday. Mrs Crosby said the tours would be limited to 30 people at a time and would be by invitation only to Coit customers who have qualified for the offer....More than 2,000 copies of her book, MY LIFE WITH BING, have been stockpiled at the mansion for the tours.....

BING WAY WAY BACK -

Our notes in recent issues about the Bing Crosby Friendship Club, flourishing in the 1930's has had further interesting developments. Remember (page 12, previous issue) VINCE WARING, of Wigan, was good enough to send us photO-stat copies of the actual magazine. From this we printed a list of new members to that club - in 1938! And one of them was RAY FORSTER, of Liverpool and we asked, in brackets: COULD THIS BE THE SEEF-SAME RAY FORSTER who even now, albeit from a different address, is a member of our Circle today? It was, and is! RAY was therefore prodded into putting his typewriter to work with the following results:

Mentioning my name in the previous issue of BING (page 12) may have been a thinly-veiled ploy to ensure I signed on again for another 12 months so herewith my one small cheque. I'll collect my long service certificate the next time I'm down your way !

Seriously though, it was quite a surprise at the ripe old age of 61 to be reminded of one's activities at the tender age of 16. I must admit, however, that my membership of that particular club, the Bing Crosby Friendship Club, did not last too long, mainly because the adulation they afforded Bing was just a bit too much "on the sentimental side" for my liking. Too feminine, perhaps! And then, of course, shortly after that I found myself wearing a suit that cost me nothing but needed its buttons polishing every day; and that lasted me a few years too many.

> The call-up to HM Forces cut short my listening to the Kraft Music Hall on the short waves in the early hours of Thursday mornings. RECEPTION ON THE 31-METRE BAND VARIED FROM FLUTTERY TO ALMOST PERFECT, and although I clearly remember the excitement of sitting there with headphones clamped around my ears and the format of the show, I don't recollect much of the programme content. Yet for some odd reason - memory has such amazing quirks - I can remember one of Bing's opening remarks which was - "A funny thing happened to me on the way to the theatre tonight ....(pause).... I had to walk!"

I can also remember the frustration of hearing Bing with all the old 'attacking' fervour of those days giving out on all the popular songs of the day - songs like WHERE OR WHEN, THAT OLD FEELING, SCATTERBRAIN, TWO BLUE ORCHIDS, DEEP IN A DREAM

I SEE YOUR FACE BEFORE ME, and even THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS OF VIRGINIA, all live on the show but never put on commercial record. However, thanks to the miracle by which these KMH shows were retrieved in such astonishing fashion from John Scott Trofter's garage (!) I can hear quite a number of them again, more than 40 years later. Needless to add there were no tape recorders in those days.

> Another clear recollection of the KMH listening days was a night when Bing's programme came through loud and clear on several points on the medium wave at local station quality. I learned later that this was caused by sunspot activity resulting in phenomenal and freak radio reception but at the time I became so excited that when the orchestral non-Bing bit came on, I shot upstairs, woke my Dad and asked him to come down and listen to this remarkable reception. I won't bore you with HIS reception of my excitement, but I will admit that my early morning listening had to become a little more circumspect after that episode.

Thinking back to those days inevitably brings back a host of memories; as a schoolboy, holidays with parents at Great Yarmouth. There was a fish shop there with white tiled walls that made sound reverberate. The man used to play Bing records at full blast to attract custom and if you've never heard Bing at full throttle in a fish shop then you've never heard Bing sing! Seeing MISSISSIPPI more than once...it was reissued more often than THE SOUND OF MUSIC. Where is it now, I wonder?

When the old radiogram went phut and Dad replaced it with a radio, table model, to my great consternation it took a family protest conference to persuade him to correct the error. The large new radiogram was delivered at 11.30 on a Saturday morning and its first words were 'The time is twelve noon. This is the BBC bringing you Songs from the Shows and our first record is THE MOON GOT IN MY EYES by Bing Crosby from his new film, DOUBLE OR NOTHING.

Then again, the day when my mother was to take me to see PENNIES FROM HEAVEN and suddenly found she hadn't enough money. A knock at the door turned out to be the gasman who emptied the meter and left the copper-rebate usual then, and this paid for the cinema. Truly PENNIES FROM HEAVEN.

Coming round in Northallerton RAF Hospital to the tune of Bing's SYMPHONY - which wasn't all that surprising really because at that time every tenth record had to be Bing's.

The Bing sessions we had at RAF Charter Hall, and changing into civvies at Hawick Station toilets when on a weekend trip home without a pass, the main purpose of which was to bring up a fresh batch of records.

I still simulate a limp when I waslk past an MP on a railway station.

inding myself on something of a nostalgia trip I looked through some of those old wartime press cuttings and this made me wonder whether some of the younger members can possibly realise just how big Bing became between say 1940 to 1950? Its all there - the ten year film contract, Top Actor,

Top Box-Office draw, Top Record sales, Top radio shows. You could buy a magazine with a picture of Bing on the front but no mention of him inside, simply because the picture gave them the sales boost. Newspaper advertisements which simply said BING CROSBY RECORDS ON BRUNSWICK because whatever he recorded sold. Even when in 1950 a reporter who chased Sinatra (who was in hot pursuit of Ava Gardner) half-way round Spain and finally cornered him in a bar, the story he came back with was that Sinatra said Bing Crosby was the greatest singer in the world.

> Even though Bing's American radio show was never broadcast by the BBC until recently (and then not KMH) he was nevertheless, one of the most regular broadcasters here. Apart from COMMAND PERFORMANCE and MAIL CALL, the BBC were so inundated with requests for Bing that what couldn't be slotted into Forces Favourites were played on regular 10-minute BING SINGS programmes which went on for years; another series of BING THE COWBOY etc. was broadcast weekly at 7 am. And even when the tide began to ebb in the 'Fifties we still had Ken Sykora with his Thursday roundabout Crosby spot when he played a medley of three songs each week.

Despite the newsprint shortage Bing's success story was always being well written up somewhere. I have many, many, articles and one especially by Leonard Wallace (I don't know who he was) which dealt with the subject of Bing's change from a singer who acted to an actor who sang. I also have retained several cartoons from years back - I bet its a long time since MEN ONLY has a picture of a fella (Bing) on the front-cover.....not that I purchased such material, of course. (In case the wife should read this.)

> Editor: I've seen the MEN ONLY Cartoon of Bing...I can only hope Ray's last sentence is totally humorous and was intended for publication. But what a delightful piece of economic writing, with a special sense of humour. We find ourselves wondering why it took an unusual circumstance for Ray to thus reveal his talents.
>
> Its fair to say quite a number of members have written to say they too used to tune into the original Bing KMH broadcasts in the small hours. One can only wonder how they felt at school (or work) next day! We never aspired to such adventurous radio - and if I managed to stay up and hear ten minutes of dance-music via the BBC I was sternly admonished by parents - especially when they had to almost literally drag me out of bed next morning!
>
> But I love the thought of Ray putting on a limp when he passes an MP even today! We have a few ex-MP's in the Circle! As for Bing in the fish-shop....well, it figures, as they say, he could be heard literally ANYWHERE !

And G.R.T.(Tom) EVANS of Willenhall in the West Midlands, also a member of that long-ago Friendship Club, had a most unusual experience. VINCE WARING of Wigan was the chap who turned up the actual copies of the 1937-38 magazines and in one of them Tom Evans came across the name of NANCY COOMES and this certainly rang a bell in Tom's mind. He writes:

I was very interested in seeing the name of Nancy Coomes in this August, 1938, magazine for I remember well she used to come along to our meetings. My curiosity really piqued, I went along to the address given only to find the Coomes's were no longer there. Hardly surprising, I suppose after a lapse of 45 years. However, I was able to enquire from people nearby who remembered them; I was passed from one house to another before discovering that her Dad and sister had died. In fact, there seemed to be some doubt as to whether or not it was Nancy who had passed on.

To cut a long story somewhat shorter I discovered that Nancy was now Mrs. Beaumont and living in south Birmingham - and more enquiries finally led to her actually phoning me - the first time I had spoken to her in all those years. What a lovely surprise it turned out, for both of us. We found a lot to talk about.

Editor: Glad it turned out so nice; we'd be a little diffident about making enquiries after nearly half-a-century, but Tom's story goes to show it can be an exciting experience.

> Tom Evans, by the way, is hoping that he and his West Midlands colleagues will soon be able to resume their local get-togethers: his address is 84, Brereton Rd., New Invention, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV12 5LR - Telephone Bloxwich 76978. to those who have a mind to contact him.

MEMBERS IN THE SOUTH, PARTICULARLY ON THE SOUTHERN COASTAL TOWNS will be glad to know that PHIL CLARKE, after a very troubled and inconvenient couple of years, is now settled and anxious to resume his Bing activities. His address now is: 21 Stockhearth Lane, Havant, Hants, PO9 3BU. And Phil writes:

> We hope to resume our 4-a-year meetings very soon and members old and new are invited to contact me with this in view. Meanwhile on a general basis I have video tapes of THE STAR MAKER, DIXIE, SHE LOVES ME NOT, DOUBLE OR NOTHING, SAY ONE FOR ME: HIGHTIME, MISSISSIPPI, HERE COMES THE GROOM, RIDING HIGH and many more. Exchanges welcome - I require GOING HOLLYWOOD, COLLEGE HUMOR: TOO MUCH HARMONY: WAIKIKI WEDDING: TOP O' THE MORNING and STAR SPANGLED RHYTHM.

With the deepest regret we announce the death of our member MR. T. F. AYTON, of 30 Hillsley Rd., Paulsgrove, Portsmouth, Hants. He had been the keenest of members and we were greatly saddened to hear from Mrs. Ayton of his passing, which was on 20th September last. Mrs. Ayton told us....

> "...he had been such a fan of Bing's that we had Bing's recording of WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS played at his funeral service. We are sure that would have been his last wish...and it meant a lot to me andall the family as well..."

A fitting and comforting tribute.

A REMARKABLE LADY

A very remarkable lady indeed you may think on reading this. Many members have met ENA HOOLEY of Winchester, for she has been at Leeds several times, she attended at the Waldorf-Astoria last May and rounded off her Crosby social acitivities - we think - at Gateshead on October 14. I'recall some years ago that Ena sat down confidentially by me at a Leeds gathering snying, "Just say I'm elderly....but they can see that. Don't give my age..." It was around this time last year that Ena lost her husband in distressing circumstances. Even sadder was the fact that immediately after this bereavement, she was given the flat she and her husband George had so desperately waited for as a change from their fixed-caravan abode. George of course never saw the flat....despairingly Ena felt she had to get away and luckily she had a good friend, indeed a cousin, to help herand comfort her from - of all places, - Gateshead. As stated, Ena got out of the flat by attending the Waldorf event In London. Now read on, one might say! Oh, it should be said that this story, which will either tire you out or invigorate you, came in just a letter, hand-written, nicely rounded, easy to read and barely a comma has needed editing !

Lillian and I had a really good night last Friday at John Joyce's event at the Five Bridges Hotel, Gateshead. There were close on seventy present but funnily enough, I didn't seem to know any of them. We all enjoyed the dinner very much and, of course, the Crosby music was smashing. I loved seeing the two films again, too. One of my requests, HARBOUR LIGHTS was played and Lillian had PLEASE. Lillian won a smashing prize - and gave it to me! Its Bing story-telling, TOM SAWYER on three LPs. She won it in the quiz.

But this is what put the highlight into the evening for me. I was sitting with Lillian with my back to most of the folk as it happened and a modern waltz was being played. But just before that two or three couples had danced a slow fox-trot. Its not really a dance, of course, but people do seem to like it when the music is suitable. I sat looking on rather enviously as I used to be a ballroom dancer as Lillian and I nattered away when I heard someone say: "May I have this dance?" Talk about butterflies! I had a thousand at that moment as no one else was then on the floor and I was terrified I might only make a mistake but not be able to dance at all! All eyes were on us. He was such a nice chap - Dennis Saville. I told him I hadn't really danced since the War as George never did dance.

Dennis said hadn't either - but he was a real dancer. One knows! How I loved it! And when it was over, this nice man took my hand and returned me to my seat and bowed!

John Joyce, who afterwards told me I had done well, had earlier stood in the middle of the floor introducing everyone and from

wwhere they came.

> "Ena Hooley," he said, and looked at me with a smile. "39?"
>
> "No," I said, laughing. "I'm 77..."

Perhaps Dennis Saville asked me to dance for I was certainly the oldest Bing fan there - female at least. Later on he asked me again and got John to take our photograph whilst dancing. Butterflies persisted, but luckily I had had a couple of brandies which helped me to lose a little of my self-consciousness. I must say that Dennis made me feel like a Princess. Lillian aid "Well, you really are the Belle of the Ball!" And I felt it.

> Not only that, but when I mentioned to Dennis that I'd requested CHAPEL IN THE MOONLIGHT but it wasn't available and I hadn't heard it since the 30's, he said just jot down your name and address and I'll send you a cassette with it on!

I am enjoying the fresh air up here in Gateshead very much. Its smokeless now but my, the gales nearly blow one off one's feet! All the old houses are coming down, and new ones going up. Not high-rise flats like the one I'm in which was built years ago with those misguided planners. There are tons of green, open spaces everyyhere and I have the loveliest view at night-time (Ed - This is Lillian's flat, of course) All the golden lights for miles around and we can see the Five Bridges Hotel right on the skyline - we're on the 11th floor. Lillian, her mother, me and George, were up here when the Queen opened it so we went and had a drink there on the Friday evening.

I wanted to see Hadrian's Wall, me being originally a Geordie and never having seen it. Lillian has, so off I went. Not being tourist time I had to go by bus. Well, the driver put me off and told me "Its only 1½ miles up that road to Housesteds."

> Off I set, all uphill and the gale-force wind was crossways, almost blowing me into the middle of the road every so often. Luckily there was no traffic. Well, I walked and walked, breathless, my heart pumping like anything when I came to the signpot which said "HADRIAN'S WALL - 3½ MILES". Gosh, what should I do?

Anyway, I had boasted to several in Hampshire that I was going to see it at last, so I sat down for a while on the grass-verge as my knees seemed to be giving way. At least, that's how it seemed. "Here goes," I then said to myself, "even if it kills me, I'm going on." I pulled a branch from a small tree with spikes on it, scared in case someone in a car stopped me. But no-one came, though I kept looking back over my shoulder. I sat down half-a-dozen times as the winding road was all uphill.

Well, I must have got to within perhaps a mile of my destination, sat down again and said to myself "How on earth am I going to get back to civilisation again only the Lord knows." Up I got again - then suddenly a car pulled up. I never heard it for the howling wind. It was a fairly small car but I was father scared to look and see who was in it. But I had to, of course, and lo and behold! it was an elderly lady. I could have jumped for joy. She beckoned

and I went over to her happily. She opened the car door and I nearly fell in with the wind. She thought I had been out shopping and was going to some outlying farm as I was carrying a white plastic bag. So I told her my real desination and she took me there. "There it is," she said and it was just as I had pictured it. At last I had seen Hadrians Wall. But I didn't get out of the car as I felt I was at the end of my tether, if you might call it that.

This lady then took me all the way back down the hill where I could board the bus again. You can imagine how grateful I was and how much I thanked her. She turned round and away up the hill again; she told me she was on holiday, staying with her brother at his farm.

Its a queer thing, at least it is with me, something always happens like that. Even when I was going up and up that gale-struck winding road, I felt something was going to happen. But fancy, all that time - and it turned out to be an elderly lady!

Well today we go to Beamish, the Railway Museum, and where they - women and men - bake the bread in the old-fashioned fire places with huge ovens, black-leaded like the ones we used to have....

Editor: Thus Ena's quite incredible story of persistence and indeed endurance. At 77! And we'd just about prepared the above when a postcard arrived. From Belfast. It read:

Perhaps I've surprised you once again. I've flown over to Dublin from Lillians in Gateshead to stay with two friends. So I took the chance to see Belfast. Taken by taxi all round the Falls Road and Shanklin Road and seen the Army patrolling the streets and all the bomb damage. Very sad. I've been to Killarney and Tralee. Just had to get away from the flat for a while though I do feel a lot more settled now. I'm flying back to Newcastle onMonday then home to Winchester on Thursday.

Editor: Exhausted? I read Ena's reports for the first time in my dressing-gown about 7.30am on a wet, windy, morning.... I had to go back to bed afterwards ! But I think it fair to claim her a remarkable lady.

Having met Dennis Saville we know him to be all Ena says..... and Ena among her Crosby activities, has often had records played over Radio Solent and other local stations. Furt ermore, she was instrumental in having a Rose Garden of Remembrance in honour of Bing after his death installed by the Middleham Gardens Trust in Lynton, Devon.

And willy-nilly, ENA HOOLEY has provided us with a report of sorts on the big event at the FIVE BRIDGES HOTEL, Gateshead. Seems to have been highly successful, as it usually is. While they work well up in the North-East organising their events it seems they spend all their energies thus for, while we get urgent notes that "It is coming!" the reports never arrive. And when they do, it is too late!

With 70 people present it marks a big advance in North-East Crosby interest - which has always been noticeably strong. And now they have a BELLE OF THE BALL !

FROM SPOKANE TO THE GROUSE MOORS

BING'S ROAD TO BRITAIN

It is history now that Bing - finally - came to have a remarkable relationship, or rapporte, with Britain and its people. Perhaps it was more remarkable that we have hitherto thought. Certainly it was longer delayed than any of his screen ROADS....but the Road to Britain, once trodden (to be lyrical!) soon became exceptionally well trod!

From around 1932, the year which saw Bing's meteoric rise to world fame, scarcely a year throughout that decade didn't have its share of "positively confirmed" reports that BING CROSBY WAS COMING TO BRITAIN! But, of course, they all came to nought: Bing didn't come. Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, the Mills Brothers, the Street Singer, the Boswell Sisters and many more of Bing's early contemporaries did come and make highly successful and well-received tours, the show-place of the London Palladium being their 'Mecca'. But it was to be an incredible 44 years before Bing finally appeared at this famous variety theatre.

> This was, of course, no deliberate shunning of these isles by Mr. Crosby. The true facts were that his incredible and unpredecented success ensured that because of his contractural commitments to radio, recording and films for years and years ahead, ruled out any chance of spending time outside the United States.

Bing must have been well aware of his popularity here; it was reported that during the 30's he was receiving 10,000 fan letters a week and it was plain that a large proportion of those letters were coming from Britain. Indeed, in some of the replies Bing wrote in reply to people here he did show a sharp awareness of his standing in Britain. It was because of this, no doubt, that the rumours of his imminent arrival here persisted for assuredly negotiations were constantly being opened up - though doomed to failure for the reasons just stated.

> One well recalls a report in the MELODY MAKER of around 1937 (The MM was the leading show business paper here) that definitely stated Bing was here "...he had been seen driving round the West End of London in a white Rolls Royce.." ! Pure imagination on someone's part, of course, but illustrative of the great and genuine desire to have the world's most popular singer here.

In the event, it took 12 years longer, plus the considerable impetus of the Second World War with thousands of American servicemen in Europe, to bring Bing to Britain. But the unbelievable warmth of his welcome, even in those conditions, is well illustrated in the story that announced his arrival in that self-same trade paper, THE MELODY MAKER of September 2nd, 1944:

(cont.

SEPT
1944

HE'S HERE!

SEPT
1944

BING CROSBY ARRIVES

BING CROSBY IS HERE ! The world's greatest popular singer - stated to pull down £225,000 a year - has arrived in this country to entertain the troops, and the MELODY MAKER takes a modest bow for being the very first paper to report that he was coming.

In last week's issue we told you he would be arriving any day, and that he would broadcast to Home listeners.

Our information was pretty good. He arrived a day after the MM was issued, and he duly sang to Home listeners in 'Variety Band Box' last Tuesday.

A full report of the broadcast by our Editor, who watched it being recorded, is on page 3 of this issue.

Bing arrived in Glasgow last Friday night - 25th - and after being mobbed on the railway station by a crowd of women porters, who induced him to sing 'Blue of the Night' and 'Glasgow belongs to me', climbed into a sleeper, and knew no more till, he told us: "They hit me with a pot of tea around 7.30 in the morning."

Bronzed, blue-eyed, 40-year-old Bing has with him a company of six - comedian Joe de Rita, guitarist Buck Harris, accordionist Earl Baxter, and two glamour girls to provide the feminine song and dance attraction.

HE HAS A GREAT ADMIRATION FOR DINAH SHORE, WHO, HE CLAIMS, IS THE TOP IN HER LINE OF BUSINESS, AND FROM ENGLISH ARTISTS SELECTED AMBROSE & HIS ORCHESTRA AND THE LATE AL BOWLLY AS HIS FAVOURITES. BOB HOPE ALSO URGED HIM TO LISTEN TO TOMMY HANDLEY'S 'ITMA' PROGRAMME.

Europe is to have the benefit of gf the Crosby pipes till November when his contract requires him to return to California.

He still can't read music, and does not have a piano in his suite, as he claims there is no-

report cont. over....

one to play it.

Golf is his favourite tame and he hopes to play on some of greens.

His 'Variety Band Box' recording is being repeated this Sunday (Sept. 3) and Bing also broadcasting with RSM George Melachrino and the British band of the AEF on the AEF programme on Wednesday.

TONIGHT, THURSDAY, AT 8.30 PM HE IS AGAIN ON THE AEF WAVE LENGTH WITH MAJOR GLENN MILLER'S BAND.

Thus the somewhat hard-boiled but barely suppressed excitement of the trade paper at Bing's very first arrival in Britain. Mind you, they had been reporting BING'S COMING! pretty regularly throughout the 30's as stated earlier - and at last they had indeed got it right. The ordinary lay press, of course, made a big thing of Bing's arrival even though those old enough will know that the daily newspapers were reduced to a pitiful two pages during the War. Yes, two flimsy pages will startle those not old enough to remember it. Your Editor has good cause to well remember this drastic cufting down of newspapers from about 24, or even 36 pages for like so many others, the course of life was dramatically and irrevocably changed, never to return to the old way. What seemed a promising Fleet Street career was nipped in the bud, for good or ill. Newsprint became a precious commodity and had to be severely rationed. However, that is another story.

Note that Bing gave immediate evidence of his gift for the apt and neat vernacular for which he became so noted: "They hit me with a pot of tea...."

And Bing has described his extraordinary reception at Glasgow station in CALL ME LUCKY and elsewhere, where he was startled at the stern authority of the station-master! In passing, we may mention that one of our members is a signalman at the large Glasgow station today - no doubt he wishes he had been in that position then - but he was too young!

Bing was either well-briefed or did indeed know something of the British scene with his mention of Al Bowlly, Ambrose and Tommy Handley's ITMA (Its that man again - a radio institution in those days as most will know.) Bing, of course, gave what was rare in those days, though common today, a Press Conference. Both that and the full report of the broadcast in VARIETY BAND BOX has appeared in BING before so we will not duplicate it here; it was full of excited and admiring detail of Bing's extraordinary professionalism, his original wit and general charisma of geniality and charm. The details of all the broadcasts mentioned are also very well-known, especially the one where the incredible 15-year-old Anne Shelton was so surprisingly rushed in to join Bing and do an astonishing job of quipping and singing with Bing in EASTER PARADE. The broadcast with Major Glenn Miller is also now well-known, for in somewhat miraculous fashion it was saved from a scrap-heap only a few years ago and has subsequently been issued on various private, or semi-private, LPs. It is a peculiarly lack-lustre performance though of priceless historic value, of course. Perhaps it presaged the tragic event to follow so quickly on that broadcast with Bing, when Glenn Miller

disappeared in hig plane over the English Channel, neither to be seen again and giving birth to another legend which persists to this day in Glenn Miller recordings and the sound of countless 'Miller-type' orchestras playing round the world.

So, if it took a Wartime 'duty' visit (as it might be termed) to bring Bing to Europe there is no doubt that Britain and the Continent itself, war-torn, weary and dispirited as it was, made an impression on him and his rapporte with Europe, and especially Britain, really burgeoned. Within a few years he began crossing the Atlantic frequently.

> True, there were contributory reasons; his recording activities began to ease from the frenetic years. His film commitments also lessened. The scenic, restul, golf courses, as well as the horse-race courses made a particular appeal to Bing, with his long-standing lover of the two sports. It might be said that Bing began to relish the easing of his contractual requirements. It is easy to imagine Bing thinking ....well, I've done a lot...it would be nice to ease off and indulge myself - golf, horses, shooting, safaris, fishing... And it seems he found those pursuits especially appealing here - except for the safaris, of course!

He was still far from free regarding work and thus it came about he was to make films - in France, and later, here. He made a fishing documentary here....recorded here ..... recorded in France. And, of course, Dixie Lee died..... No doubt all these pursuits, or the new setting for them here, were a great help to him at that time.

And whenever Bing came here, without bodyguards, without retinue, without publicists, without gimmicks, the press, TV and radio always noted it. Always there was the warm welcome for this man who made millions of memories for all of us. Newspapers provided Leading articles on him, he was invited onto all kinds of radio/TV interview, chat, programmes. He came to love viewing the sights of London, ordering tweeds in Bond Street....popping up to Gleneagles, back to Wentworth... seeing the Derby....

> And it is certainly true what some of the posthumous books on him have said: he was at least two different persons! He certainly was - but not perhaps in the manner these speculative biographers would prefer us to believe. While he remained ever genial, ever cheerful, always willing for a word, accept a "Thanks, Bing" from hundreds of people wherever they learned he was appearing, it must be true too that Bing also lived the life-style of what he really was: a distinguished, diplomatic, multi-millionaire 'man of the world'.

Thus he was liable to be the guests of the aristocracy, that peculiarly English class which it seems will always persist, and stayed at stately homes...became the intimate of Lords and Ladies. He came to shoot grouse on the glorious 12th - and even then remembered there are people who abhor the shooting and hunting of birds and animals, remarking: "The birds aren't in any danger from me - I'm a rotten shot!". Thus the diplomat! (Cont.

Bing frequently sent us a taped message for our Leeds meetings; on one occasion he much regretted he couldn't make Leeds, " "....but I was recently in Ripon - that's R-I-P-O-N ..." he spelled out for us and went on to enthuse over the beauties of the Yorkshire dales and the architecture in some of the towns. He fished in Cumberland at Cockermouth for trout and salmon...and the visits got more and more frequent. The lad from Spokane was set fair to become the complete English gentleman! Especially when it was revealed after his passing that he was actually negotiating to buy a home (with a golf-course!) in Kent....

And there were those - many of those - who felt Bing should have received more official recognition here than the unofficial honour he always received. They felt he merited an appearance in the Honours List. But protocol is quite rigid in Britain - foreigners, or to be more kindly, non-British - can be honoured in special categories but straightforward recognition is rare to come by. Even so, its a whimsical exercise to speculate on how Mr. C. might have been so treated had he joined the aristocracy he became friendly with in his British sojourns - Count Crosby, Baron Bing, Lord Harry ?

> The years 1975-77 are too recent to need detailing except to say that in this time he reached the peak of his British rapporte. Bing must finally have been more than assured of what the British people thought of him - and that is a warming thought for all of us.

Bing did, of course, receive an invitation to Buckingham Palace, chiefly on account of his massive charity donations from the Palladium shows; that publicity was difficult to avoid but the fact is that 90 per cent of his charitable gifts here went completely unsung, unpublicised. Also he was the recipient of a scroll, presented at a most impressive ceremony, by the Greater London Council. They at least had things in perspective.

And fate decreed, finally, that Bing made his last Christmas show in London....shewn posthumously, of course, here and in the States, the season with which Bing will for ever be indelibly linked.

Across the page is a report appearing as Bing made his first TV show here; all those associated spoke the same as ALL the artists, illustrious and otherwise, who worked with Bing thro' those long years. How futile it is to try and denigrate this man....

Christmas seems a good time to mull over all these things...

WHAT A SURPRISE to learn that Bing was all set to appear in BBC Televisions anachronistic programme THE GOOD OLD DAYS ! Barney Colehan, the veteran producer revealed this as his greatest regret - that Bing died soon after the details were finalised. It was in a TV interview on Nov. 13 when Barney was talking about the incredible success of this show (its where the audience dress up in Victorian/Edwardian costumes) due to end with still thousands of applications for tickets unfulfilled.

John Gough

LOOKING AROUND

GAY Californian hat on back of head, pipe in mouth, utterly at ease, Bing Crosby sauntered lazily into a London TV studio.

The enduring crooner, still clear-eyed and trim-waisted at 58, had arrived to rehearse for a "Made in Britain" show with British guest stars, British director and technicians.

You can see the result on Friday when *The Bing Crosby Show* is screened.

With Bing (and Bob Hope, who pops up almost inevitably) are five top British artists who had won the Crosby seal of approval — Shirley Bassey, Terry-Thomas, Dave King, Miriam Karlin and Marion Ryan.

Impact

But to me the most interesting aspect of the show is the impact the world's richest entertainer created on the company.

Listen to Dave King: "The first I knew about the show was when Bing, in London, telephoned me asking me if I could suggest musical arrangers for his show.

"I'd met him in America when we were both guests in a Rosemary Clooney Show. As he talked it was going through my mind, 'I wish he'd ask me to be in the show,' and then he said, 'By the way, Dave, I'd like you to be in it.'

"Well I fell all over the place.

"It was one of the best shows I've ever played, for the simple reason it wasn't a job of work. It was all so easy, relaxed and enjoyable from the first rehearsal to the finish.

Worrier

"And, of course, the man responsible for this wonderful atmosphere was Crosby himself. I think, like everyone else, my vision of Crosby was of a man who was utterly relaxed and capable of taking everything in his stride; and he is exactly like that.

"For me this was good because I'm a bit of a worrier, about rehearsals, making sure everything is just right, that sort of thing. The result was, of course, that I was able to relax as well, probably more so than in any show I've done.

"At rehearsals, for instance, Bing and I often put our script to one side. He would ad-lib and I ad-libbed back until everybody was caught up in the fun."

Relaxed

Listen to Miriam Karlin, who is seen in a street market sketch with Bing: "Most of it was ad-libbed" she told me. "I would never have dared to try it in the ordinary way.

"I am the most nervous artist in the business, but working with someone so fantastically relaxed, Mr. Relaxation in Person, and those blue, dreamy eyes, how could I be nervous?"

Peter Croft, who had the responsibility of directing this costly show, told me: "Bing was just fabulous, always the first to arrive at rehearsal and completely professional."

And Peter Knight, the musical director, added: "He's the most wonderful performer, no trouble at all. He has complete confidence in you, and you have complete confidence in him. He's so professional — and such a nice person."

Bing has certainly an enthusiastic fan club in British television.

OLD GROANER

Bing Crosby always did know how to swing.

He freely confessed yesterday that that extraordinary English game called cricket had him stumped.

But after yesterday's withering Test batting from the West Indies, home supporters might well be telling the chairman of our selectors, Mr. Alec Bedser :—

Stumped or not, a few swings like that could bale us out.

The 72-year-old singer was learning the game the traditional way—on a village green at Kirkby Malzeard, North Yorkshire.

And coming from a man who is more at home driving a golf ball than a cricket ball, his first question was "How do you hold the bat?"

Gift

Youngsters pulled Bing into the game after he turned up to present the playing fields committee with a surprise gift of £1,200.

He decided to help out after staying last year at the nearby home of club president Mr. Godfrey Bostock.

Bing said afterwards: "I was only too glad to help the club but I realise that cricket isn't my game.

"I won't be watching the Test match—it would take me a week to understand what it is all about."

Then the sportsman left to bag a very different game . . . six and a half brace of grouse on Mr. Bostock's 1,000-acre estate.

As Bing said, the Glorious 12th of August was "a glorious day all round."

WELL, HOWDY PARDNERS - THE MARSHALL'S BACK IN TOWN ! JOHN OF THAT ILK who seems to be recommending: FORGET CHRISTMAS! ----

IT'S MAY 5TH.!

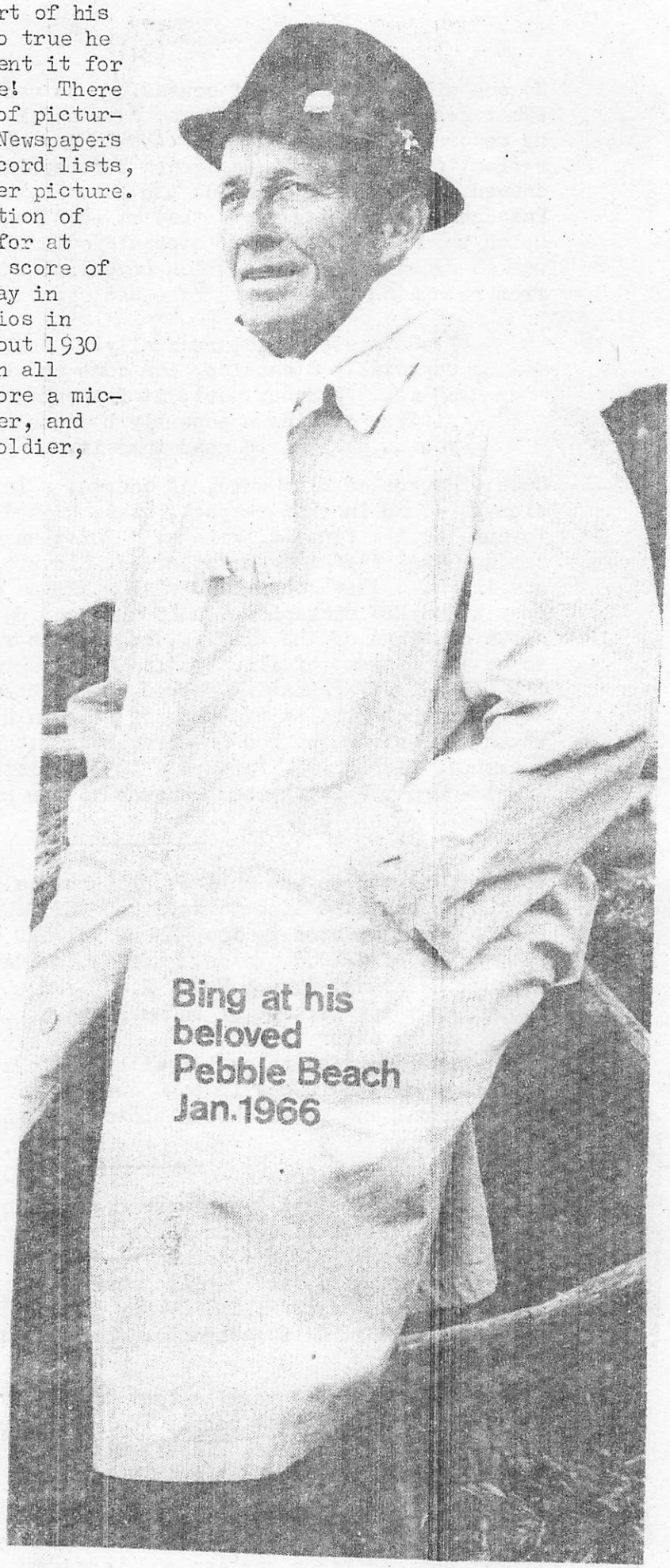
For all those who went to the Waldorf last may, and for those who didn't and afterwards wished they had, JOHN writes:

We were looking for a venue that embodied all the good and prestigious points of the Waldorf but bypassed the lengthy list of black marks which detracted from May 7th last and its many good intentions. Directly opposite the Victoria & Albert Museum and other famous landmarks, due to inaugurate extensive redecoration, new sound and lighting systems &c. the REMBRANDT HOTEL seems to qualify on all counts. The face-lifting starts Nov. 15 and will allow us to meet on May 5th 1984 in one of the nicest hotels in London. We had a drink there to check on prices, so at 80p for a pint of bitter and 85p for one of lager, that seemed to us possibly slightly more than your local but well inside West End rates. That applies throughout the hotel, functions included. Foodwise, we remembered previous experience and settled for a trencherman's buffet complete with all the traditional meats, pork, chicken, &c with salads, gateaux, coffee and the various trimmings. We also have a preview of the foodstuffs, prior to them being served and at which point we can lay down the law on your behalf. Quite apart from the time-consumption of a sit-down meal, this allows <u>you</u> to pick what you want and as much as you can eat. Coffee, tea and sandwiches will also be available throughout the day at reasonable prices as in any down-to-earth hotel - anywhere - Seating will be casual with tables generally for eight - but sit where you like and if you want to, wander around with your plate and fork! Parking, anywhere this side of the Sahara, can never be totally certain but on three separate weekends, Saturday & Sunday have found Thurloe Square, which provides one wall of the hotel and is largely weekday business houses, capable of accepting anything up to 50 cars. Cromwell Road, on which the hotel stands, has many adjacent quiet streets and the Forum Hotel, less than 10 minutes walking distance away has a 450 capacity National Car Park. Again, you are no longer at the West End gunpoint. The exit from South Kensington Tube station (CIRCLE LINE) is actually beside the hotel and the Circle line covers all stations that anyone might care to use.

TO AVOID WANDERING AROUND TOWN, we'll be open for business from 1.00 and can promise you a fine room that is delightfully suited to our purposes. We'll be decorated to the 'nines'; there are many surprises lined up and we fall back on that same experience by promising there won't be any long-winded speeches, distractions from the main objective - meeting people or anything else which we may have - inadvertently - got wrong last year. AS TO COSTS, THIS MUST REMAIN AS LAST YEAR AT £12 and this is partly due to increased overheads on better food and hiring the rooms - something they threw in at the Waldorf expecting to get it back via high prices. We can't deny there were a few 'oversights' in 1983 and that red ink ran amok so we hope to avoid the confusion of two separate letters and get it all over in one go. The initial deposit has been made, its the green light all round : WE DO NEED TO KNOW YOUR INTENTIONS, <u>MINUS MONEY</u>, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE PLEASE. March 1 allows everyone three clear months to sell off a few of the family jewels and that would allow us some weeks of not having to sit and worry who paid what and when. Teddy Johnson tells us that short of a broken leg he'll be there and in the intervening months we'll be looking around for some more nice people. More than ever we're indebted to BING 80 for showing us pitfalls and unless you can think up any we've missed out on, our second time around should really do the trick. ONE IMPORTANT POINT: we cannot undertake the booking of hotel rooms though we'll help in that direction with reasonable prices, addresses &c. Last year's changes of plan with a very few left us holding a rather large baby. LET'S CONCENTRATE ON HAVING A GOOD DAY MEETING FAMILIAR/NEW FACES and celebrating Bing's 81st anniversary. HOPE TO SEE YOU - R'AL SOON !

If Bing spent a large part of his life singing, it is also true he - or rather others - spent it for him in taking his picture! There are literally thousands of pictures of him in existence. Newspapers magazines, brochures, record lists, film stills, picture after picture. We have a vivid recollection of Bing patiently standing for at least 15 minutes while a score of photographers clicked away in Chappells recording studios in London in 1975. From about 1930 it was ever thus - and in all guises, romantically before a microphone, fisherman, golfer, and because of film roles, soldier, sailor, GI. or Captain, priest, family man...the list is endless, the variety mind-boggling.

Picking a favourite picture of Bing would be as difficult perhaps as picking a single favourite record. Yet we must admit to a real liking for the one shewn. We don't know its origin - whether or not it was amateur or professional. We've never seen it in colour but its easy to imagine Bing is certainly acceptable in a sartorial sense - off-white mackintosh, green soft hat, white scarf elegantly tied against a chill wind no doubt..relaxed, reflective...perhaps reflective is the best word - not sad, not forbidding, not smiling or grinning. Just reflecting. On what? Anybody's guess of course. Do another film, a TV show? What to have for dinner? Perhaps he was watching a golfer, wondering whether it would take one or two shots....



Bing at his beloved Pebble Beach Jan.1966

No one will ever know, of course. As can be seen, the picture was taken in 1966 when Bing was 63 - and it was the year in which he recorded only two tracks. Which may give further cause for reflection ! And it was years before his lung-operation that caused worldwide concern and the later fall from the stage in Pasadena - two major blows that at last began to mark Bing's age, which began to erode that 'eternal youthfulness' for which he was so renowned. Blows which nevertheless didn't prevent him from returning to the work he - and certainly we - loved.

> Its a mystery picture really. Perhaps someone, especially Stateside, can come up with more detail on it. For our part, it is perhaps our favourite picture of Bing - possibly because so much can, if you so desire, be read into it.

Such picfures of Bing were, of course, a large part of album sleeves - and in that respect, alas, United Artists did him no favours on the final offerings. But then again, Bing's astonishing longevity as regards career, did present problems to the compilers. They could hardly show him as a 26-year-old warbling away at an NBC microphone: unless it was entirely relevant to an album of songs of the time.....on the other hand, was it necessary to go the extreme of illustrating a septugenarian ? At least, the LIVE AT THE PALLADIUM solved the problem in more satisfactory style, with brilliant pictures of Bing in his final performances where, it seemed, he had in miraculous fashion trimmed 20 or so years off his age. Perhaps a 1950's picture of Bing - somewhere in mid-career - is the best answer to the picture problem.

However, for those who collect picfures as well as records, this must be the appropriate time to say that THE BING CROSBY PHOTO CLUB has been reactivated as the NEW PHOTO CLUB which offers a whole new series of COLOUR photos. Write to FRANK MURPHY, 32 Ferndale Avenue, Wallsend, Tyne & Wear, NE28 7NE with SAE for full details, including a special set of unusual colour photographs as an introductory offer to the club. For those who feel that they still have dealings to settle with the former club, Frank is most anxious they should get in touch with him. There are certainly some unusual and little-known photographs now available.

BING ON THE BOX: Just as we were beamonning the lack of Bing films on TV in the last issue, in the nick of time we were able to note that IF I HAD MY WAY had turned up; and as soon as we had posted BING bless us if a double-bill occurred on BBC-2 on a Saturday afternoon with PARIS HONEYMOON and TOO MUCH HARMONY ...several have told us HOLIDAY INN is scheduled for the Christmas programmes this year.

And we did intend to mention last time that Sergeant Bilko show "featuring" Bing. Most people feel Phil Silvers (a good friend of Bing's) has immortalised himself with this smart-aleck army role. Certainly one can laugh no matter how many times they are seen.

The one featuring Bing could be classed as a bit of a 'swindle' for Bing appeared for about 10 seconds! But what was of interest (and we hadn't noticed it on earlier showings) was the screen appearance of brother Everett - the "Wrong" Crosby as Bing said he was at one time known. Was this his one and only appearance ? Know of no other.

DISCROSBY

...recalling records of all ages from that bountiful legacy.....

****

Firstly, my warmest thanks to all those who so quickly filled in that gap in my self-confessed 'ignorance' regarding SONG FROM 'DESIREE' - and an apology to Gwen Harvey who first referred it to me, thus revealing my lack of knowledge! It is, of course, the 1954 recording entitled WE MEET AGAIN. I must confess that these blind spots do occur among Bing's 50's recordings - a time when circumstances were not conducive to collecting, e.g. spending necessarily time abroad and getting out of touch. But, away with excuses - and thanks again!

*****

We also had a note or two about the Harry Tobias song WHAT IS IT? mentioned on page 21 of the previous issue of BING and featured by Mr. C. in 1931. In this case, however, we didn't say there was no such song; merely that we hadn't heard it!

*****

I wonder how many have played ZING A LITTLE ZONG lately? I know when I saw this first in the film JUST FOR YOU, I thought it a really tremendous production job. It marked, incidentally, Jane Wyman's singing debut, and as she also sang the song with Bing on the commercial recording, its fascinating to get Jane's story of the song and the way it was done in the film (1952)

*****

Bing wasn't on the set the day Jane arrived and was told by Paramount's musical genius, Joe Lilley, that the time had come for her to "do a bit of a number" with Bing. "Then," said Jane, "Joe flashed eight yards of sheet-music on me. I took one look and the only thing it resembled was the board at the New York Stock Exchange. Why, thank you Joe, " Jane went on, but seeing I can't read music I can pick this up as fast as I can learn to speak Portuguese. You musical bone-picker why don't you write a simple song for a change?"

*****

"You got me wrong," Joe retorted, "Warren and Robin wrote this song. I merely arranged it, and if you'll drop over to my office we'll run through it. Its simple once you get the hang of it!" So Jane went to work on the song that changes key twice in the middle with no warning and in a week she was fairly well prepared to get even with Crosby for all the fluttering he'd caused her every time she stepped up to a mike with the old Master. Bing strolled onto the set one morning and said: "Hi ya, how's the golf? Anything great?"

*****

"I gotta learn to putt," said Jane. "Well," Bing assured her, "it'll come to you....now how's about us knocking off this ZING number?"

"I'm nervous," replied Jane, "I'll never make it."

"Huh," Bing came back, "you'll do it. Know anything about it?"

"Nothing," said Jane, "except, like you said, its so simple."

*****

They adjourned to the music-department where Joe Lilley handed the Groaner his part. "You should have seen it," said Jane, repressing a chortle. "Just like handing the guy an anvil."

"What's this now?" Bing asked, looking a bit confused.

"Why, its nothing," said Jane, "nothing for a big music man like you." "Let's not overdo it," growled Bing, and retired to a distant corner. "And that's about all of it," Jane said. "My ego was fit to burst.

BUT, in fifteen minutes he mastered what it took me a week to figure out. By the time we recorded to the rhythm of Van Cleave and his band, my ego was completely under control.

*****

Must gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to the Newsletter of the BING'S FRIENDS & COLLECTORS SOCIETY - only four pages but it contains some delightful snippets such as the above. This society is based in California and most of its members appear to be from that state. We wish them well.

*****

As Jane was also on the commercial recording of the song, that must have come as a relief with no dancing &c. involved. Actually, Jane Wyman was more associated with dramatic roles and did a terrific job as a song-and-dance girl.

*****

Mention of the Longines Symphonette set in the BING of August last also provoked a lot of mail, additional of course, to what Les Gaylor tells us in this issue. Jim Ramsey, a member living a stone's throw from here in Gwent, was resident in the States in the 50's and 60's and tells us that the Mishel Piastro orchestra was a very prestigious one indeed, its broadcasts and other performances being highly fespected. No doubting its quality on the evidence of the Longines recordings yet its probably true to say it was unknown over here until this set came out.

*****

Another strange thing: most members reported a different price for this set, ranging from £8.50 to £10.00! Same thing with the BING'S HOLLYWOOD SET of 15 LPs we were talking about - some said they had got them for 28/0d, others averred they were 32/3d! Its safe to say that IF the set was reissued today the price wouldn't be far short of £50. Perhaps it will all come out on one of those laser-scan disc things!

*****

I'll always recall the delight of a member (lady) who found a big shop going into liquidation and got most of the Hollywood set - for 50p each ! As she said at the time, breathlessly, the bargain of a lifetime. It was indeed.

Can't help wondering how many took a cursory glance at the reproduction of a leaflet facing page 13? And then passed quickly on....or were you puzzled at the reference to Decca Album No. A-306? The bottom line, in very small print, shows the date to be 1942 - the issue was concurrent with the release of the film HOLIDAY INN, and this was many, many, years before the advent of albums - long-playing records - we we know them today.

*****

It was the practice in America to issue albums of 10" 78rpm records in series, or albums, in attractive packages. As far as we know these were never issued outside the States. But this, of course, does not mean a lot of them are not here in the possession of UK collectors. These were the ones keen enough to obtain them from America. As a point of interest, I once possessed such a set, getting it from a second-hand store! It was a complete novelty; a package of six 10" records in a purple and gold box.

*****

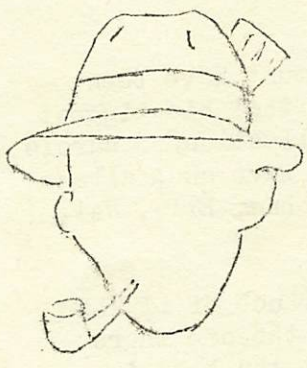
A more youthful collector than yours truly, and one bent on a full and varied collection, was completely bowled over by my acquisition and out of the goodness of my heart, I gave it to him! I had the records anyway, and never aspired to a complete collection, although as things have turned out, I'm not far short now !

*****

The practice of issuing "albums" in the States certainly continued with the advent of the 45rpm record - firstly singles, and then the EP, i.e. with 2 tracks per side. I wonder how many know that the OLD MASTERS Vols 1, II, and III which we got here in Decca's Ace of Hearts (and what a series that was!) first saw the light of day in no less than nine EP's - covering the 36 titles. The next major step, of course, was the 10" LP, followed fairly quickly by the 12" currently with which we are so familiar. Bing EP's were issued freely here, of course, but as we say, so far as is known, not in boxed, album, form.

*****

Its often been remarked that Bing had that happy attribute of seeming to bring out the best performances in any other artists he sang with - the story of Jane Wyman above is yet another example, but there are scores. His easy-going, reassuring approach to the job obviously instilled the feeling there was nothing to worry about. It'll be all right! Listening to some not-often-heard tracks the other day yet another angle on this rapporte with supporting artists came home to me.



*****

Like this...The Merry Macs, the Four Aces, and certainly the Mills Brothers, were highly individual acts in their own right with a special merit of their own. Instantly recognisable and with their own following. Yet as I listen to Bing singing with these the thought is irresistible: He became a Merry Mac, a Mills brothers - or a fifth Ace. We would demur at saying he became

a sister to the illustrious Andrews - but certainly a special 'brother'. And in any case, his partnership with these three ladies was a special, unique, and long-lasting one. But listen to Bing with the Merry Macs in, say, YOU MADE ME LOVE YOU; with the Mills Brothers in SHINE, or DINAH; not to easy to hear him with the other group mentioned, The Four Aces for as far as we can see he sang with them only on radio.

*****

But the rapport is quite magnificent. His record appearances with them were fleeting - Merry Macs and Mills Bros - yet there was no air of big 'special' guest about Bing - he fitted in perfectly with the mood and style of the groups almost instantly. One recalls that nice story about the group that was having trouble with an arrangement; the studio manager and others were getting hot under the collar because it was holding up Bing. They finally explained the delay and Bing, reportedly, said "Give 'em a chance...they'll get it. I'm in no hurry." And lit his pipe and read a book in the corner.

*****

True or apochryal? We're inclined to believe it. And possibly it was the Merry Macs concerned. No doubt there was a certain amount of initial awe when asked to record with Bing - which he would laugh off. After all, remember our own Anne Shelton said singing with Bing was "something I've dreamed of for years!" And Bing guffawed and said: "Aw - come on...."

*****

Its a little shattering to be nearing the end of a Christmas DISCROSBY to find we haven't even mentioned a Yuletide record - the season for which Bing is (these days) especially noted. Tho' come to think of it, 'these days' is unnecessary for we well recall the delight we had from SILENT NIGHT and ADESTE FIDELIS long before the War, long before WHITE CHRISTMAS ! We hadn't quite got accustomed to Bing's astonishing versatility in those long-ago days. So to hear the great voice which had given us PLEASE, LOVE IN BLOOM, JUNE IN JANUARY and so on deliver with such sincerity - not to mention tone! - those great Christmas songs was a thrill indeed, never to be forgotten. It was only later we heard Bing's modest declaration that he recorded them with some reluctance - "...not having the stature to sing such songs..."

*****

Bing proved his real stature in not only singing the songs in incomparable fashion but on donating the huge royalties which followed their success to charity.

*****

And its fair to say that, for good or otherwise, it must have been Bing who initiated the idea of a "Christmas album" - tho' his biggest effort wasn't made as such for it consisted of a collection of carols &c. he had recorded over the years. Today the shops have such albums by every Tom, Dick and Harry, not to mention Dean, Johnny, Ella, Nat, Jim and so on.

*****

As a parting shot, I am NOT regretting the non-appearance of LITTLE DRUMMER BOY this year - not the original version but the one where Bing was 'helped' by a certain D.... B.... All the best !

FILM SPECIAL

BING'S FIRST COLOUR FILM

Disregarding the relevancy of the tinted KING OF JAZZ (it wasn't a Crosby film tho' Bing appeared briefly in it) DIXIE was Bing's first film in colour. And that takes on a new meaning and makes our heading two-edged. The film, made in 1943, told the story of Daniel Decatur Emmett (1815-1904), considered the "Father" of minstrel shows which became so popular; all will remember our fairly recent BLACK & WHITE MINSTREL show....here we get the contemporary slant on DIXIE by

RON BOSELEY.

Member Ray Morris of Leeds raised an interesting point when he asked: Whatever happened to the film DIXIE and if there was any chance of seeing it on TV?

Sadly, I would say that Ray has very little chance of seeing the film on televisionand for the very same reason that programmes like the Black & White Minstrels once so popular are no longer shewn.

Certain minority groups in the past have made it very clear that they consider 'Blackface' acts to be racially offensive.

The film & television unions also strongly support this view and proclaim their opposition to anything that they think will foster racial prejudice.

No one in their right mind would think that DIXIE was made to ridicule the black people but such is the climate today that we cannot really blame the TV people for treading very carefully.

I once wrote to the BBC pointing out that they had not shewn DIXIE and observing that it seemed strange that it should be omitted from the package of Paramount films, first purchased in the 60's, which covered just about every major feature film of the 40's decade.

The reply I got was to the effect that they did not think it suitable for British audiences. People may point out that 'blackface' routines are not new and have been seen on TV, e.g. HOLIDAY INN, HERE COMES THE WAVES, BABES IN ARMS, etc. but they were just isolated scenes and not the main theme of the film.

DIXIE has been on Australian TV and, of course, in the United States but even in America there are some stations that will not show it.

I myself - like many others - have a copy of the film on video tape. I first saw it in 1943 - in Naples, of all places!) and it really is a lovely film.

I can only suggest that Ray Morris gets himself a video-recorder. It really IS wonderful to be able to see those films again whenever you wish - or he is welcome to visit me and see it in my home.

Editor: Indeed, video-recorders open the door to a new world of enjoyment. Regarding the racial climate now prevailing, Bing showed himself to be well aware of this many years before his death. Chatting to some of our members on the subject of SHINE with the Mills Brothers he remarked such a tie-up, and especially with that particular song, would be quite impossible now on account of the changed, and changing, views on the racial question with particular relevance to the coloured folk. Bing was talking about America and since then, of course, the question has become much more acute here at home. One can only reflect that towering figures like Al Jolson, Amos 'n Andy and others just could not build their careers today as they did once upon a time.

BING SINGS

Here is a nice story which proves conclusively that God exists.

Some 15 or 16 years ago the Daily Mail ran a National Film Award and gave a party at which a well-known singer had been hired to perform.

At the last moment the lady had the vapours, and asked for double the agreed fee. A distraught managing director sought inspiration in that sacred place where all the greatest decisions are made - the Gentlemens' Lavatory.

At that moment God took a hand. Into the Gentlemens he guided Mr. Bing Crosby who by a fluke happened to be playing in the British Open Championship and had just come back from the golf course.

The managing director, a man of immense vitality and charm, went straight up to Mr. Crosby, explained what had happened, and asked him to sing.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Crosby, "why not?"

And wearing his golfing jacket and without his 'toupay' as he put it, he strolled into the ballroom and gave the most brilliant ex tempore performance I ever heard. Never have I known such relaxation, so much effortless charm.

He sang for an hour and a half and he refused a fee though I understand the Daily Mail gave him the most beautiful dressing-case that ever came out of Asprey's. I'll say he deserved it.

I don't think the story has ever been told. Crosby biographers please note.

True or false? This story appeared in THE DAILY MAIL a dozen years ago - Weds. March 3 1971 to be precise. And as the cutting refers to 15-16 years previously, it takes us back to 1956 which was the year when, in addition to playing in the Open, Bing played charity rounds with Bob Hope against the British comedian Ted Ray, and singer Donald Peers. One of those occasions mentioned in FROM SPOKANE TO THE GROUSE MOORS earlier in this issue when Bing's visits here began to get so frequent - and happy.

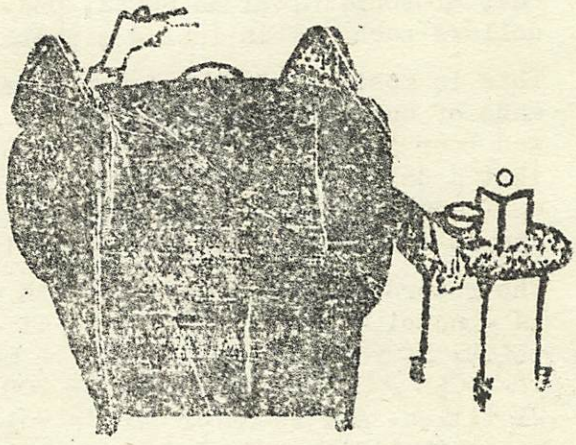
The story lacks prime detail: where was it? Some 5-star super hotel in London's West End; the managing director? Some titled acquaintance of Bing's ? I mean, one would have to be in some kind of privileged position to be able to ask Bing Crosby to fill in ! Yet, it seems the writer was there and extols the impromptu performance.

Alas, it has appeared in no biography of Bing, despite the hopes of the writer. But then, some of these writers ignored the nice things.....

RON BOSELEY, 105 Polefield Rd., Prestwich, Manchester, M25 5QN is making his virtual life-time's collection of Crosby pictures available to members. Hundreds of rare film stills, plus photos of Bing at work and play, covering the 30's to the 70's. All are clear, glossy, black and white pictures, size $6\frac{1}{2}$" x $4\frac{1}{2}$", price 50p per picture. Send SAE for list.

WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED THE NOVEMBER newsletter of the BING CROSBY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - "THE CROONER" (pity about the broad title!). Receipt is gratefully acknowledged. We hate buoying up hopes in case of disappointment but this chatty little booklet DOES say the new book, written by our Canadian friend, SHELDON O'CONNELL will be in the shops by Christmas - whether this extends to Britain we can only wait and see. And hope. There is an intro by PHIL HARRIS, a foreword by RICH LITTLE (the noted impressionist), chapter on collectors, a discography &c. and many good photographs. We found it most interesting to learn that publication came about as a result of last May's Waldorf event in London when American contact was made with our member, MICHAEL O'TOOLE, of Dublin who found, or knew, a publisher interested. Main theme of the book is a celebrated radio series by GORDON ATKINSON,"THE CROSBY YEARS",

BING track EVENTS



I've taken up our favourite reviewing position in the chair but truth to tell there's little to talk about - at least, in the way of major issues. It may be something for the Guinness Book of Records that the WHITE CHRISTMAS - or MERRY CHRISTMAS as it used to be - album has been put out for the 20th consecutive year. That must be a record.(!) It is again on the Music for Pleasure label at £2.25; it was on this label last year - perhaps the one before. Earlier, of course, it was issued on Brunswick and then MCA. If one includes the 10" version which preceded it, its well over 20 consecutive years. An amazing life for an album and quite unprecedented in its continuing appeal. Not of much interest to our fraternity who have had the record (and renewed it occasionally) for most of that 20 years.

In any case, more sales will be notched up to add to the already astronomical total this well-loved album has attained.

Pity that Warner didn't have the foresight to issue I WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS again for this is one of the really neglected Christmas albums of Bing. But then, Warner doesn't seem very active in any direction these days.

BING CROSBY & FRIENDS, VOLUME II is, we understand from Mike Slipman, available at £5.50 post paid - cheques to be made out to M. SLIPMAN who regrets but it must be UK only. The address is 153 Francklyn Gardens, Edgware, Midd'x. Titles include:

Careless Love: Bing & Burl Ives. Timber Trail: Bing & Enzio Pinza
Until the next time: Bing & Mickey Rooney. Michigan Medley: Bing & Beatrice Lillie. Go West, young man: Bing & Groucho Marx.
I Still suits me: Bing & Peggy Lee. For what? Bing & Bob Hope.
Indian summer; Bing & Dorothy Kirsten.

Volume I of BING & FRIENDS proved most enjoyable and we regret fuller details are not available of this Vol II. But it sounds promising - air-shots, of course.

Lack of fuller details also makes us hesitate about THE EDDIE RICE TAPES, which are being much talked about in various newsletters. We dislike talking of records which are not fairly easily obtainable - especially when it involves writing to the States, then a long wait for material that may be in all kinds of quality. Or lack of it. All know the story by now of how a dedicated American collector named Eddie Rice, having made friends with John Scott Trotter in the pursuit of his Crosbyana, came across a huge pile of dusty,, cob-webbed, metal transcript records - most of them of Kraft Music Hall material. Quite a fairy tale. Some of this material has been available on fairly nondescript tapes for years but now Eddie, aged 70, is working with BROADWAY records in America to produce LPs of the better material.

Happily, we can be more helpful here for we've heard from the man

who appears to offer tangible co-operation: STANLEY HESTER, PO Box 244, MILFORD, MICHIGAN 48042, USA. A note just says Albums 4.00 dollars each - This includes postage, surface mail.

This is most helpful, but the hassle isn't eradicated. No mention is made of currency exchange, but it appesrs if you consult your calculator and bear in mind there are less than 1½ dollars to the £ these days... that 4 dollars = rather more than £2.50. Cheap indeed! BUT, surface mail can take up to 8-10 weeks to get here. Double the figure to £5 and it should pay for AIRMAIL delivery, perhaps a week only.

The record we have principally in mind from Stan Hester at this price is - note! - CROSBYANA VOLUME II - The Fabulous Rice Tapes - 1937, which, if you venture, should be made clear. It includes SMILES, THAT OLD FEELING, SWEET LITTLE YOU, I DON'T WANT TO GET WELL up to 21 titles. And remember Bing's voice in 1937....it contains 8 or so songs thst Bing recorded commercially which you will have but as the brochure points out, these versions are considerably different in many cases. If this album sells well there will certainly be others. One final thought re. hassle: It is POSSIBLE the Customs poke their nose in and you get ask for more cash on delivery. But, this is not very general.

There is yet another album floating around; floating is the operative word for it doesn't seem to anchor in many places. We saw it in London at a price of £7.50 and frankly didn't consider it worth that - or anything like it. It is BING CROSBY & LOUIS ARMSTRONG, Entertaining Live Broadcasts 1949-50. Actually they are parts of Philco programmes and were issued in Italy some years back, see page 106 of the LP-ography, e.g. PANAMA, LAZYBONES, ROCKIN' CHAIR, MY HONEY'S LOVIN' ARMS, etc. etc. This album first came to our notice because a Hereford artist did the cover caricatures of Bing and Louis and got a spread in the local paper! We haven't seen it locally - don't suppose you have? And the material is, of course, on countless tapes.

CHRISTMAS-CROS-QUIZ

1. How many Christmas records did Bing make with the Andrews Sisters - 2-4-6-
2. How many of them have appeared on LP ? (or more?
3. Which Bing Christmas record mentions the "Aurora Borealis" ?
4. Father O'Malley sang SILENT NIGHT in 'Going my Way', and ADESTE FIDELIS in 'Bells of St. Mary's'. Which 'Father' sang THE SECRET OF CHRISTMAS - and in which film?
5. Insert the word "Christmas" 11 times in the following lines of gibberish to reveal 11 Bing song titles.

   I'LL BE HOME FOR THE SECRET OF THAT FEELING IS HERE TO STAY HOW LOVELY IS THE SONG IS A'COMING IS THE SONG OF WHITE CANDLES.
6. The 10" LP MERRY CHRISTMAS was issued in 1954 originally; what four titles were added to make up the 12" album subsequently issued?
7. The arrangement of one of Bing's Christmas songs includes the JINGLE BELLS theme in the opening bars - which?
8. The following famous names appear in the composing credits of three of Bing's Christmas songs: which? (a) Mel Torme (b) Gene Autrey, and (c) Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.
9. These lines could be from romantic ballads but are from Bing Christmas songs. Can you identify the songs?
   (a) And if all my dreams come true..
   (b) Where the lovelight gleams...
   (c) And then, at last, my heart is answering...
10. Disregarding KING OF JAZZ and other early 'oddments' how many Crosby films did Harry Barris (one-time Rhythm Boy) appear in?

Set mainly by LIONEL PAIRPOINT - the answers (should you need them!) appear further on...

TRADING POST

Herein, of course, members may advertise without charge for records, books, tapes, and all Crosby memorabilia; there IS a nominal charge of £1 for non-Crosby items. Keep insertions to a maximum of 6 lines. Where lengthy lists are involved, invite a SAE for lists. All entries are printed in good faith relying on the integrity of members, but it is up to members to satisfy themselves they are making a satisfactory transaction.

BING ties in dark blue or maroon, with the silhouette 'motif' are available from THE BADGE CENTRE, 45 Ropergate, Pontefract, West Yorks, WF8 1JY but the price has had to be increased, they tell us, because price of ties/post has gone up. Price is now £3.00 post paid.

CHRIS SULLIVAN, 1 Woodside Grange Rd., North Finchley, London, N12 8SJ is keen to obtain the albums HOLIDAY IN EUROPE and RETURN TO PARADISE ISLANDS.

ALAN PARKER, 4 Eastbrook Close, Dinas Powis, South Glam. (Phone 0222-512530) wants swops of Bing radio shows (have 70-odd KMH and other periods,) big bands, Sinatra, Cole, comedy on radio, GOONS (146 shows), Hancock (110), cassette and reel-to-reel.

JOE GARDNER, 19 The Copse, Forest Side, North Chingford, London, E4 6BH: I have a number of 78s for disposal, all in good condition, from 1930-36 Medium SAE for lists.

BOB JONES, 39 Gladstone St. Hebburn, Tyne & Wear NE31 2XD offers cassettes C90 £2.50 each of Bing, Jolson, Dick Todd, Lanza etc. etc. State requirements.

DAVE SMITH, 31 Whitecroft Rd., West Moor, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE12 OEY: A good friend has asked me if I can give him any good contacts for any Elvis Presley records, commercial or otherwise, and also of a singer called MICHAEL JACKSON!! A little out of my league but can anyone help?

ALAN PARKER, 10 Heath Park Aven. Skircoat Rd., Halifax, West Yorks HX1 2PP offers all 15 recordings of the '76 Radio 2 series on TDK C120's,ie. 8 tapes in perfect condition,never jammed or snarled as such cassettes are reputed to do. £12.00 including post and packing. All, not individually.

DOUGLAS RICE, 14 Mutrix Gardens, Westbrook, Margate, Kent CT9 5HQ is offering a stupendous collection of Bing records, 78s and LPs, plus books & magazines. Send SAE (9" x 4" variety) for lists. Includes various boxed sets and details of thousands of other records for sale, jazz, personality, dance bands. Am NOT a dealer, just selling out in my old age! Phone Thanet [illegible] 34170 after 6.30pm - wife won't know the answers !

ARNOLD BAKER, 48 Groomsport Rd., Bangor, Co. Down, N. Ireland offers wide selection of cassettes/reel to reel of radio programmes, including Australian and rare Bing items on good quality C120s or as required. Send medium SAE for catalogue.

BING - JUST FOR THE RECORD remains available from:

JOHN JOYCE (BOOKBINDERS)
Saltmeadows Rd.,
GATESHEAD,
Tyne & Wear NE8 3AH

This is the hardback volume which lists all Bing's recordings in both alphabetical and chronological order. It is quite invaluable for reference and browsing purposes. We still get a lot of mail asking: 'DidBing record this...' or 'When did Bing record that...' which indicates they have not availed themselves of this book.This is no hard advertisement but we do feel members without it are doing themselves a disservice. The price of £3.50 post paid is a special one - by a pukka publishing house unconnected with the ICC the price would be almost double.

NOTE FOR OVERSEAS READERS: The price of BING - JUST FOR THE RECORD IS AS FOLLOWS: European £4.00 US/Canadian £4.00 surface mail, £6.00 airmail.

All remittances must be in sterling and payable to: JOHN JOYCE, ICC ACCOUNT.

And for all those of JOHN JOYCE'S "LIMITED EDITION" project, those who didn't get the 1st issue, THRO' THE YEARS, it is available on cassette £2.50 post paid.

REMITTANCES FOR THE SECOND ISSUE (£5) should be sent to John NOW !

MRS. RENEE CHESTER is now well-known for her comprehensive collection of Crosby films on video which she is willing to copy. SAE to Renee, at 48 Milton Road, Hanwell, London, W7 for full details. Films and TV shows, it might be added. Renee also has a few of the neat little Bing lapel badges, 50p post paid.

ICC Car-stickers, 3" dia. circular in blue/gold are obtainable from BARRY THECKSTON,13 Cuhliffe Aven., Ramsbottom, Lancs - 60p each or two for £1. Just send remittance with SAE.

Small stocks of the following now remain, obtainable from the Secretary (REG BRISTO)
PHILCO RADIO TIMES by LIONEL PAIR-POINT; full details with prolific notes of Bing's radio programmes for that company. £2.50 post paid.
THE ABC OF BING by COLIN PUGH: a painstaking analysis of varying 'takes' of Crosby records. £2.50 post paid.
THE BING CROSBY MINI-DISCOGRAPHY: this has to an extent been superseded by BING - JUST FOR THE RECORD, see above, but remains useful for those wishing to mark off or otherwise notate which records they have rather than disfigure the hardback volume. Price £1.50 post paid.
There also remain a few copies of the LPography, listing more than 1000 albums featuring Bing. This is now in urgent need of updating, alas, for it goes only to about 1976-77. Unlike a discography which can be complete from the first to the last recording, any listing of LPs can never be completed as new LPs are always liable to be issued. The LPography is £2.00 post paid.

JACK SOUTHER, 2011-44th Avenue, San Francisco, Ca. 94116, USA is always interested in UK contacts for Bing and other vintage material, records, sheet music &c. Useful US contact for members so desiring.

With reference (in AMERICAN REPORTS) to the plan whereby clients who had their curtains cleaned by the Coit company were invited to the Crosby home in Hillsborough and a free autographed copy of Mrs. Crosby's book, caused a lot of acrimony with meetings between the company's representatives, Kathryn, and the City Fathers. The upshot was the project was finally abandoned.

Calling it off must have been an expensive business, for some San Francisco newspapers had carried very big 'splash' advertisements proclaiming the project immediately before it was killed off.

For some quite unfathomable reason we omitted to give the answer to No. 10 of the Quiz in the previous issue! Not that it mattered too much - everyone knew the answer ! We think....

If the "X" appears on page 5, indicating your annual subscription is now due - or very soon - your co-operation is cordially invited so that we can finalise printing quantities for the March issue.

REG BRISTO,
7 Greenmeadow Close,
CWMBRAN,
Gwent, NP44 4PJ

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BING LETTERS

RON DANIELS, 1 BATTYE AVEN., Victor, Harbor, South Australia, 5211:
Lionel Pairpoint's list of items for an LP culled from 1930's radio shows (BING, June p.48) provoked more than mouth-watering. It caused me to start searching through various lists and playing numerous tapes, only to find that I hadn't got any of the songs mentioned either. However, as a result of my searching I can tell you that they do indeed all come from KMH radio shows broadcast between 16th Jan 1936 and 17th June 1937. In other words, during the Jimmy Dorsey period of KMH - John Scott Trotter took over the musical baton on 7th Oct. 1937.

Some of the songs from this period have turned up on various tapes, e.g. SOME OF THESE DAYS/WITH ALL MY HEART/ from 9.1.36; ONE, TWO BUTTON YOUR SHOE/LET'S CALL A HEART A HEART/ ON THE BEACH AT WAIKIKI/AND SO DO I of 15.10;36 SAIL ALONG SILVERY MOON 10.6.37 (as mentioned by Harry Tobias p.21 of Sept. BING). Puzzle - how did Lionel manage to pick out 20 tunes that no one has got? On the other hand, they ARE listed in the ill-fated non-commercial discography, complete with dates, so presumably someone has got them. The non-commercial discography was a Ralph Harding project which died with the CROSBY COLLECTOR.

I'm surprised no one in the UK picked you up on the AUF WIEDERSEHEN remark "..not to be confused with the song made famous by Vera Lynn in the 50's" you said....It is, of course, one and the same song, as you will see if you have the Vera Lynn record.

Picking an alternative signature tune for Bing is not easy. The type of song he sang before 1931 [illegible] lend themselves to theme tunes really. If I had to pick one from '31 I would say the song which launched his radio career - JUST ONE MORE CHANCE - would be suitable. As a second choice I would go for STARDUST, as I think this has always been identified with Bing, right through the 30's, 40's, 50's - indeed, until Nat King Cole recorded it. Then there was the 'newa fella's version but of course he couldn't remember the verse so he just left it out completely.

Editor: Good stuff, Ron. Information on the KMH must come from the Rice archives, now much in the Crosby news, OR, someone else perhaps in America, kept a diligent record of all the songs Bing sang - not on tape, of course, but in a book.

Ron floors us with his assertion on AUF WIEDERSEHEN, MY DEAR - which is the song Bing sang so beautifully in 1931 - and the one Vera Lynn sang with a Forces' chorus in the 50's.

Assuredly they are NOT the same song! We only put our note in for the benefit of younger members who wouldn't remember the 1931 composition not old-stagers like Ron! Bing (and other singers, for it was a very popular song in 1931-32) sang:

"Come let us stroll down lovers' lane,
Once more to sing love's old refrain...
Then we must say 'Auf Wiedersehen, auf widersehen,
my dear..."

The Vera Lynn song went:

"Auf Wiedersehen, auf wiedersehen,
We'll meet again, some day,
With love that's true,
I'll wait for you... etc. etc.

And the melodies were also totally different. So, what happened to Ron? The only possible explanation is that Vera also sang AUF WIEDERSEHEN, MY DEAR in the 50's as well as the new song. I am not an authority on Dame Vera's recordings - nor Sinatras, but wasn't it the verse of STARDUST the thin one sang, and not the chorus?

DAVID WARD, 51 St. Andrews St. Lincoln, LN5 7UD: Consulting my pet project, the non-cmmmercial discography, which I'm still working on and nowhere near finishing, I see that Bing did sing WHAT IS IT? on the Cremo Cigar programme on 24th November, 1931. Working thro' my lists I see this was the only occasion Bing sang this song, despite Mr. Tobias's remark that Bing featured it. Either Bing didn't like it, or Tobias didn't! Certainly it was not a song that was plugged.

Editor: Seems to me a thread is very apparent: Lionel Pairpoint, Ron Daniels, Dave Ward....all acquiring knowledge for the non-commercial discography. No doubt there are many others ploughing their lone furrows and it seems to us an excellent idea for them to get in contact and pool resources. It is true leaflets, booklets &c. have appeared on Cremo, GEC. Philco, and other radio series. The big absentee is KMH - perhaps the most fasxinating of all of them. Clearly, information is extant. Gentlemen: please get together - and all others who are interested in this worthwhile project. All the addresses are in this issue for a starting point. We would be most willing to publish a comprehensive listing which might be confined to songs/dates only.

CLAUDE BISHOP, 9 Cotswold Rd., Strelley, Nottingham: I was fascinated by the subject of an alternative signature tune for Bing tho' I must say I love BLUE OF THE NIGHT. And to digress a little, I compere shows and sing mainly at the Notts County Social Club on weekends and we had recently (as is usual these days!) a young rock group performing. When, however, they got to their last number - "a smooch" - I was surprised and delighted to hear themplaying WHERE THE BLUE OF THE NIGHT! Needless to say, I grabbed the mike and sang away. I asked afterwards the reason for their surprising choice after the head-banging (and numbing) they had been playing. They said it was a good tune and always popular - they used it always it seems for their closing 'smooch' - but best of all, they admired Bing, a different period of course. And they sounded sincere as if the Bing tie I was wearing was not a factor.

However, my choice foran alternate theme song would be STARDUST unless the Hoagy Carmichael identification was too strong. I also like LEARN TO CROON and was puzzled by your reasons for ruling this one out.

My eight LPs for the Desert Isle....DER BINGLE (10") - the songs of my youth; BING SINGS THE GREAT SONGS, a comprehensive round-up, with especially NOBODY'S SWEETHEART - I love the change of tempo. HOME ON

THE RANGE - containing all the cowboy songs I love BING SINGS SONGS OF THE ISLANDS - Hawaiian favourites not to be missed, especially with SWEET LEILANI.

BING'S GREAT FILM SONGS from the set THE VERY BEST OF BING - courted my wife to these songs! THE JAZZIN' BING CROSBY - as a jazz buff I need this.

BING & CONNIE - for the same reason, I suppose. And lastly, THE FINAL CHAPTER tho' I considered LIVE AT THE PALLADIUM, for that was the only time I saw Bing in the flesh; but the former has such emotional appeal, with the tributes, interviews - and the final song, ONCE IN A WHILE.

Editor: Very nice too. My objection to LEARN TO CROON as a theme song is a purely personal foible tho' no doubt others share it. I dislike Bing being labelled a crooner; it is dismissive. Not only that, it categories him - and he could be so categorised. He was - and is - unique.

PAUL MORRISON, Kirby Villa, Dene Crescent, Rowlands Gill, Tyne & Wear, NE39 1DS: In June I fulfilled a lifetime's ambition - I visited New York City. And what an experience it turned out to be.

On June 20 I set off from Newcastle, alone, for the train to London's Heathrow for the flight to New York's Kennedy Airport. And would you believe that while I was standing in line for my pass-port check I saw the entertainer who often worked with Bing - Dean Martin. He was surrounded by well-wishers and looked almost as relaxed as Bing.

One of the first things I did in Manhattan was visit Sam Goody's Record store - one of America's biggest - on Fifth Avenue and see what they had in the Crosby rack. Little or nothing - we've got a much bigger selection in Newcastle. I was bitterly disappointed. However, the rest of my visit turned out to be quite wonderful. I consider I must have walked 30 or 40 miles in those exciting seven days. I did it all - the Empire State building (what a view from the top!), a boat-trip round Manhattan, Central Park - not a mugger in sight), Fifth Avenue, United Nations building, Statue of Liberty, Harlem, Times Square, Wall Street, Broadway - and countless museums.

If you want a restful holiday then New York is NOT the place to be; but if you want entertainment, colourful characters, art, books, and the general feel of being in the centre of things then the place to be is Manhattan. Despite hearing and reading of all the violence and danger of New York, I never witnessed any street crime whatever. The place is magic, the magic being created by the people who live there - friendly, helpful and always eager to help.

Editor: If New York wants a Public Relations officer - Paul is the man! Paul is quite youthful - as if his letter doesn't bubble with such zest! He seems a little disappointed he wasn't mugged! Be that as it may, Paul's lifetime trip was notably different from others our members make - he went to the East Coast and not to the Mecca of most Transatlantic visitors of ours - Crosby-land and all the places associated with Bing. Still, we did like Paul's letter - and he appended his Desert Isle 8:

(1) SHILLELAGHS & SHAMROCKS: I love Bing singing the Irish songs, especially DID YOUR MOTHER COME FROM IRELAND - beautiful ballad.
(2) BINGO VIEJO: Bing's deep, rich, golden voice shewn to great effect on this later album. FRENESI is a standout track.
(3) BING, BOB AND JUDY (Totem) Bing was at his best in front of studio audience, ad-libbing to his heart's content, and this LP

is a particularly good example of Bing in this free-wheeling mood. Good songs, good comedy, clean fun, good stuff. This would cheer me up on long lonely days.
A CHRISTMAS SING WITH BING - I certainly wouldn't want to be on that island without a Christmas album and this one is my favourite. A superb rendering of O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM together with the feeling of worldwide goodwill makes this album a unique experience.

LIVE AT THE PALLADIUM - Record 2: This for the fantastic medley on side 2, breath-taking, and for MY CUP RUNNETH OVER. A special magic on this record with Bing demonstrating again his close rapport with an audience.

TOM SAWYER - all three records - Bing was, as most of us agree, not only a great singer, but also a splendid narrator and these show just how good Bing was, so naturally telling the story in those rich tones. Why oh why didn't Bing do more of this kind of thing?

Editor: Paul provides plenty to think about - especially with Newcastle having more Crosby records than New York's Sam Goody's - we've crossed him off our list!

C.D.Ibbetson, 77 The Garth, Cottingham: Happened I was in the queue in the local post office and my eyes chanced to see a tall young fellow in a sleeveless shirt and almost on his shoulder was tattoo'd BING. I couldn't resist asking him if he was a Crosby fan. He only replied that it was his name, chosen by his parents who were greatly influenced by Bing. Perhaps I'll see him again.

Editor: ? Well well, now who were HIS parents....

STAN HOBBS, 249 Kingsbridge Rd., Morden, Surrey, SM4 4PX: I have acquired a pile of 78s, including 25 vintage Bing records in splendid condition. Readers often tell of these great days in collecting - here's our mine came about. As a neighbourly act I was allowing a chap, with his friend, to try out a trailer tent on our lawn. But I should explain first that I have always been a keen motor-cyclist and I have two 1934 vintage 600cc BSA bikes in the garage. One of them is dismantled to be used for spares to keep the other going. Not much to do with Bing records so far! Working with this tent on the lawn it came out about the bikes during conversation and this friend showed immediate interest and when he saw the dismantled bike he pleaded with me to let him have it so that he could bring it back to its original glory. Well, I said I would think about it, none too keen. Anyway, we adjourned for coffee and naturally the first thing this chap noticed was Bing's photograph and other mementoes and I'm certain I saw a gleam come into his eyes. Then he told me his mother had passed away but had always been a Bing fan, too - and she had left a big pile of 78 records which included "a good many" Crosby records. Blackmail? Well, it was an offer I couldn't refuse, so he now has the vintage bike and I have the vintage records! Odd how things turn out, isn't it?

Editor: Never guessed Stan was a vintage m'cyclist! Takes me back to my Norton 600cc side-valve, complete with Cambridge side-car....ah me. Where did it all go for us to have Zanukis, Hondas, Yamahas and all the other Japanese imports? The very names of long ago conjure up memories - AJS, Matchless, Sunbeam, Triumph, &c Seems a fair exchange to us Stan! There are still thousands of 78s stacked away in attics, cupboards, lofts &c.

ALBERT HARVEY, 406 Ongar Rd., Pilgrims Hatch, Brentwood, Warley, Essex: The article on JOING MY WAY by Keith Parkinson, and any thing on this film, is of particular interest to me as in my memory it links the two greatest entertainers in their fields, Bing and Glenn Miller. I was privileged to attend the premiere of the film at the Plaza Cinema, Lower Regent Street, London and on stage before the film was Glenn Miller and his band. Just a few weeks previously I had, more or less, rubbed shoulders with Bing going into the Queensberry All-Services Club for his very first broadcast on the Variety Band-Box show with Anne Shelton. And it was only a few weeks earlier I had met Glenn Miller - so for me the show had a real personal flavour. I might add that this performance was marked by doodle-bug explosions and all kinds of alarms - but no one moved from the cinema. Such was the entertainment.

And what a finale it all provided. Glenn Miller wrote to me a week before he died in such a mysterious way; and I saw Bing at the Palladium just a week before he, too, died.....

Editor: Memorable course of events for Albert.

DON WOODS, 8 Penrose Rd., Fetcham, Surrey, KT22 9QA: For nearly two decades the Crosby-John Scott Trotter partnership endured and we know Bing was delighted with his new MD. But to take issue with the Editor (BING 66 p. 36) and probably to incur his undying wrsth, I get the feeling that Trotter's arrangements never quite measured up to the voice they were supposed to complement. Listen to the 1939 recording of THE MOON GOT IN MY EYES. A nice song, beautifully sung, spoilt by an arrangement so stodgy and funereal in its approach one begins to wonder if it is running at the correct speed.. Although most of the JST backings are tolerable they have about them the sound of having been put thro' an orchestral sausage-machine. They are faceless.

I would agree that the Crosby voice had undergone a radical change in this period. Gone was the emotive delivery of THANKS or BLACK MOONLIGHT, and for me he never quite created the same excitement as in the golden years 1932-6 when the backing orchestras during this time were a vital adjunct to these salad days. My first choice of the outfits playing for Bing during this period must be Georgie Stoll, always interesting and never predictable in his approach to a song. Listening to WITH EVERY BREATH I TAKE, one is both amazed and delighted at the inventiveness and audacity of the backing. It would have been in keeping to have given Bing a semi-pedestrian accompaniment - in fact, the tempo

ANSWERS TO
CHRISTMAS CROS-QUIZ !!
(turn page up..)

1. Six - JINGLE BELLS:SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN:MELE KALIKIMAKA
12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS:HERE COMES SANTA CLAUS:POPPA SANTA CLAUS.
2. All except last-named: 3 on MERRY CHRISTMAS; 2 on CHRISTMAS IS A'COMING.
3. THE SONG OF CHRISTMAS
4. Father Conroy: SAY ONE FOR ME
5. Come on! Work it out!
6. SILVER BELLS/ITS BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS/CHRISTMAS IN KILLARNEY: MELE KALIKIMAKA
7. ITS BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS
8. (a) THE CHRISTMAS SONG
(b) HERE COMES SANTA CLAUS
(c) I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY
9. (a) YOU'RE ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS
(b) I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS
(c) IS CHRISTMAS ONLY A TRUE?
10. Surprise surprise for those who incline to snide remarks about loyalty - DOUBLE OR NOTHING:SING YOU SINNERS:RHYTHM ON THE RIVER: BIRTH OF THE BLUES: HOLIDAY INN: HERE COME THE WAVES: DIXIE. Small parts as musician or bandleader usually.

of the screen version was comparatively gentle. Stoll, however, dressed it up with a jaunty, cantering, lilt, which helps lift the song into the "great" category. Another gem from the Stoll baton is SO DO I, easily the best song from PENNIES FROM HEAVEN. In the middle eight, after Bing sings "...what wouldn't it do"...the strings enter with a dramatic intensity which is unforgettable. An example of perfect backing which was never again surpassed, except perhaps by the doyen of them all, Victor Young. To the people who postulate that the orchestras of the 30's could, or did not swing, let them listen to Stoll's SAILORE BEWARE, LOVE IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER and, best of all, SOMEDAY SWEETHEART - Bregman eat your heart out! Listening to those marvellous recordings of nearly five decades past I feel that no orchestra did more for the Crosby voice than Georgie Stoll. I wonder what sort of a job he would have turned out on SKYLARK, to which incidentally, John Scott Trotter gives us an example of one of his more than usual torpid performances. More's the pity, we shall never know.

Editor: Firstly, we must remark on the number of letters received acclaiming Don's piece in the last issue - EMPTY SADDLES (in the East End of London). Secondly, no wrath, dying or embryo! Indeed, I agree with a lot of what Don says about those early recordings and the part they clearly played in the Crosby career. But, I fear his horizons are too limited, the picture is much broader. Georgie Stoll's stint with Bing, at 24 titles, was comparatively brief; and in the period Don most mentions, Bing sang along with Nat Finston, Anson Weeks, Isham Jones, Jimmy Dorsey, the Dorsey Brothers, Lennie Hayton - and all splendid recordings of the golden days, as Don puts it. And Don wonders about SKYLARK and ends "... we shall never know." We shall never know, either, how Georgie Stoll would have fared if he'd done 330-odd recordings with Bing, plus literally hundreds of broadcasts! Pertinent, I feel.

The situation most probably developed, when Jimmy Dorsey decided to opt out of the Kraft Music Hall show, that Bing's commitments on radio and records decreed he had to have a personal MD instead of using the nearest available (contracted) band! We all know that Bing was most impressed with JST after his arrangements for PENNIES FROM HEAVEN (and that included SO DO I no matter who played it!) and personally invited JST.

It follows, therefore, that any criticism of JST, founded or unfounded, is tantamount to saying Bing made an undistinguished choice. He certainly didn't think so! loyalty was a big facet of Bing's outlook - he stayed loyal to Decca/Brunswick/Jack Kapp when he could easily have founded his own record company; loyal to Paramount for his film-making - and loyal to John Scott Trotter. I would agree that a certain predictability was prone to creep into JST's arrangements - but wasn't that inevitable in the face of the sheer volume? That could have been avoided only by splitting up what was, overwhelmingly, a successful partnership. But further views are welcome..... Don raised interesting points.

Finally, if all the dreaming comes true this Yuletide and we are slithering about in snow up to our knees, fearful of the pipes freezing and all the other lovely facets of a WHITE CHRISTMAS, you may like to mull over this:

"We are now approaching the hottest part of the year; quite soon it will be Christmas. Believe me, I am always homesick for God's Little Acre, even more so at Christmas. Its all so artificial here - roast meals are definitely out, too hot, no rum, whiskey &c. Just long cold drinks...it may sound OK, but..." From a member in Perth, West Australia: he emigrated 3 years ago from his little acre - Middleton, Manchester! All upside down.....Happy Christmas